WORK AND REWARD

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WORK AND REWARD.

BY

MRS. M. A. HOLT.

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WORK AND REWARD.

CHAPTER I.

A DARK HOME PICTURE.

"A little, low-ceiled room. Four walls,
Whose blank shut out all else of life,
And crowded close within their bound
A world of pain, and toil, and strife."

"CAN I do anything for you, mother, before I go?" asked Edward Mason, in a low, tremulous voice, as he bent tenderly over the white, emaciated face of his best earthly friend.

"Nothing, my son, only to raise the curtain a little higher, so that the sunbeams will enter more freely into the room. There is something very cheerful to me in the bright sunlight, and I

half forget my sufferings when its beautiful radiance steals in so peacefully through the little window. Sunshine and flowers are my especial favorites among the beauties of nature."

"I know it, mother, and I'll get a fresh bouquet of flowers before I go. There is a good supply of pansies, verbenas, and heliotropes in the garden this morning. Maggie can go and help me get a nice fresh bouquet of these grand flowers. I wish that you were able to go and see them in the garden. I tell you, mother, they are perfectly beautiful this morning."

"I can think just how they look, Edward, even if I cannot see them," answered Mrs. Mason, while a smile came over her white lips. "I never expect to go into the garden again, but it is a pleasure to think of the bright beauties existing there. Pain and disease cannot confine thought in a room

like this, even though they do my poor aching body."

"But, mother, don't you think that you will at least become well enough again to sit in your chair by the window, and walk to the door, where you can look out into the garden, as you did early in the spring?" And the boy looked earnestly toward his mother, awaiting her reply.

She shook her head a little sadly, but answered, in a half-cheerful voice:

"No, Edward; I shall never walk to the door again, or even occupy the old rocking-chair by the garden window. I am much weaker than I was a month ago, and my cough is far more distressing and frequent. I did hope, all through the early spring days, that God would spare me another year; but now I know that it cannot be. I do not speak of this to alarm you, Edward, but to quietly prepare you for the change that must sure-

ly come. I know that you will try to meet it bravely, as you ever have your dark life trials."

The mother had spoken very calmly and quietly, as though it was some ordinary event; but Edward was not really prepared to accept the truth just then, and so he turned away with a strange, deathly feeling stealing over him, and unbidden tears streaming down his cheeks. He was about to pass out of the little room, when the mother gently said, "Edward."

He at once heeded the call, and turned again to the bedside of the sick mother. He tried to check the fierce storm of emotion, but the bitter tears would come in spite of all his efforts to keep them back.

"Edward, it is only for the sake of my two children that I wish to live," said Mrs. Mason, in a low, pleasant voice. "There is no other tie that binds me to

this world of suffering. You know how bitter has been the cup of affliction which has been pressed for long years to my lips. Heaven is far brighter than earth, and its holy rest will be wondrous sweet to me after the sufferings of this present life. I repeat again, that it is only for your sake and little Maggie's that I wish to stay. You are a true, noble boy, and I am not afraid to trust you in the world; for I am sure that you will shun the paths of sin, and especially the dark way of intemperance. But your little sister needs a faithful guide for many a year, to lead her over the first rough paths of life. It is of this I wish to speak, for you must be her friend and guide until she understands the great principles of a true life. She will sadly miss her mother at first, but you must strive in every possible way to make up her loss. You will have a

few leisure hours, and these you must spend in her society until the shadow that death shall bring will partially have passed away."

"But I did not think that you would die so soon, mother," moaned Edward. "I thought that you might live a few years longer, if you were careful of your health and did not work too hard."

"Freedom from work will not save me now, Edward," was the answer. "It might have done so a year ago, but it is too late now. And as I cannot labor any more, it is undoubtedly far better for me to die. The little money that was laid by for a stormy day is surely wasting away, and I am afraid, by the time I am placed in the grave, there will be none left for my children."

"But I am earning wages, mother, and I can take care of Maggie," answered Edward, in a firm, manly tone.

"It will be a hard task for you, my son, even though you should be well and fortunate in obtaining employment. Aunt Jane will undoubtedly assist you as much as her limited means will allow. I do not know just how you will get along after I am gone, but I trust in God to watch over your interests, and I leave you in his hands. Your father, I presume, will not assist you in any way." And here a sad sigh came from the speaker's lips.

"If he will only keep away from here, and allow us to manage our own affairs, it will be all I will ask of him," replied Edward, half resentfully.

"If he would only turn from his evil ways, and become a true father to you, I should go from the world perfectly happy. Perhaps God in his own good time will bring this happy change about." And here the sick woman turned her

head, and seemed lost for a few moments in thought.

Edward walked gently out of the room, and soon he and his little sister, who was playing with her white kitten in the garden, were busy in plucking the fresh, dewy flowers.

"What is the matter, Eddie?" asked little Maggie, as she chanced to catch a glimpse of her brother's sorrowful face. "Has Daisy run away, or did Carlo bite you, Eddie?"

The brother smiled in spite of his sad thoughts, and then secretly wished that there were no deeper sorrows in the world than little Maggie had known. She knew nothing of the sorrows that had silently taken up their abode in the drunkard's home; for, strange to say, the father never, by word or deed, had intentionally wronged his sweet child of five summers. It is true that he wrong-

ed her by his neglect and general misconduct; but to the child herself he betrayed a feeling of tenderness far above his rough, unloving nature. Even when maddened by strong drink, he never molested the little girl, although Mrs. Mason and Edward often suffered from his mad, wild freaks of dissipation.

"Daisy" was a beautiful white lamb, the almost constant companion of Maggie in her rambles by the roadside, and in the little green yard in front of the low, humble home. Once it had wandered away, and was gone for two long days, and the grief of the little girl at its absence knew no bounds. It was found at last, and its mistress was happy again. Carlo, a playful little dog, rightfully belonged to Aunt Jane, who resided only a short distance from Maggie's home; but he had taken up his abode with the Mason family, and refused to

stay with the lonely woman who had at first adopted him. His sharp teeth showed but little mercy when at play, and Maggie was often the victim. So the child really thought that the two greatest sources of misery in the world were Carlo's teeth or the absence of the white lambkin.

Edward did not answer the child, but, instead, enquired:

"Don't you think that these flowers are very pretty, Maggie?"

"Yes, Eddie; but you look so sorry that I did not think about the pretty flowers. They did not make you cry, Eddie?"

"No, Maggie; but I was thinking about mamma. She is very sick, you know."

"Yes," replied Maggie thoughtfully; "but if we carry her such pretty flowers, and give her medicine, she will get well

again; then Kitty White and I can play just as we used to do, and not have to keep so still in the house."

Edward did not reply, but turned toward the door of his humble home. After arranging the flowers within reach of the invalid, he said:

"I must go now, mother, and leave you in Maggie's care until Aunt Jane arrives. She will be here in a little while. Mr. Cole requested me to come as early as possible, as one of the clerks will be absent to-day, and I shall have extra duties to perform. I will bring you a nice orange when I come for my dinner, or anything else that you wish for. Good-by, mother."

And the boy stooped gently over and kissed the white, pallid face of the sufferer. Then he hastened away, and left her with Maggie, who was very quiet and womanlike when in the presence of her

sick mother. Mrs. Mason closed her eyes, and was soon lost to all things save the angel of slumber. Aunt Jane came, and, finding her sister sleeping, remained in the little kitchen, attending to the work that needed to be performed. She had been very kind to the sick sister, and day after day had visited the sad home, to look after the interests of its inmates. People called her an odd, half-crazy woman, and wondered why she betrayed so much sympathy and affection with her peculiar nature. But people do not always understand the great principles of human action, for the moving power is hidden in the soul's secret chambers. They judged Aunt Jane, as they do the rest of the world, from their own stand-point of outward observation, knowing nothing of the true soul of the lonely old woman who lived in her solitude. Her life had been made wretched

by the common destroyer of the race—intemperance. A husband had fallen in the strength of his manhood, and two sweet children in those lonely years had been laid away in the grave; and so all of the pleasant home-ties were severed. A brother of her husband, who was a kind, wealthy man, feeling for her in her sorrows, secured to her for life a small yearly allowance, which saved her from hard toil and drudgery. People who had known her before her dark life trials began said that she was a noble, gentle woman, very much unlike the odd, peculiar being that she appeared to be in after-years.

For an hour Mrs. Mason remained sleeping, and little Maggie watching by her bedside, when Aunt Jane heard a noise that created a sensation of pain and dread in her heart. It was fragments of rough song, evidently from the

lips of a drunken man some distance from the house.

"Jacob is coming home drunk," she said half aloud, "and I must not allow him to go into Mary's room in such a condition. She is too sick and weak to witness such a scene."

The look of pity upon her face suddenly departed, and her eyes gleamed very strangely as she arose and walked swiftly toward the road, evidently to stop the progress of the drunken man.

"Keep quiet, Jacob Mason," she said, in a voice that would have alarmed a sober man. "Keep quiet, or you will frighten Mary."

"Keep quiet yourself, you crazy old fool," returned the drunken man, rushing in his maddened fury past the old woman.

He was evidently in an unusual condition, for it was seldom that he refused

to heed the commands of Aunt Jane. He ran as fast as possible into the house, singing and cursing in a strange, wild voice, and Aunt Jane swiftly following him. He rushed frantically to the bedside of his wife, pushing little Maggie aside—a deed that he never did before.

"See here, old woman, just get up and go to work!" he exclaimed, in a commanding voice.

Maggie cried out in fear, and for once the father heeded not the beseeching voice of the child.

"Get up, I say, or I'll help you," he said again, making a motion as though he would drag her from the bed.

"See here, Jacob Mason," exclaimed Aunt Jane, seizing him by the arm, while a strange, startling light gleamed in her eyes. "Don't you lay your wicked hands upon that sick woman. Stand back, I say."

The man, drunk as he was, obeyed the fierce, pale woman before him, and at once stepped back, muttering to himself, declaring that "if he could not rule his own household, he would go off and let them all starve to death."

"You had better go, you drunken brute, and I hope that you will never darken the door again. You are a curse to your family, as you have been for a dozen years. Go!" cried the half-maddened woman, springing fiercely toward him.

He started for the door like a detected criminal, making good time for a man in his condition; and not until he was fairly in the road did he begin to mutter curses upon "Crazy Jane."

But she did not hear them, for she was bending tenderly over the fainting sister, whose weak body could not bear the exciting scene which had been

enacted in the little room. Tenderly she bathed the white face, and applied the proper remedies to restore the fainting sister to consciousness. At last she was successful, for the blue eyes unclosed, and the pale lips whispered, "It will soon be over."

CHAPTER II.

THE DEATH ANGEL.

"Put by at last beneath the lid
The exempted hands, the tranquil face;
Uplift her in her dreamless sleep,
And bear her gently from the place."

"IT was a burning shame for him to come home and treat mother so!" exclaimed Edward to his aunt, after he had heard the story.

"Yes, it was a shame," answered the old woman; "for I am afraid that your poor mother has received serious injuries by the transaction. She has scarcely spoken since it occurred, and her cheeks are paler and eyes more bright and glassy than they were before.

If I had not been here, I think the drunken wretch would have dragged her from the bed. I never saw him so wild and crazy before."

"Father is growing worse all the time," said Edward. "I wish that there could be something done to check him in his sad career. He will go to ruin if he keeps on in this way."

"He is not far from ruin now," answered Aunt Jane. "The sooner he gets out of the world the better off it will be. He is a slave to a fierce, burning appetite, and human bloodhounds are upon his track. If away beyond the reach of temptation, he might overcome his inward enemy—appetite; but with traps set by human hands all along his pathway, he never can be saved. I have seen human beings before who were thus surrounded by the powers of darkness, and their way to eternal life hedged

in with dark, overhanging mountains that mortal feet can never climb. I have seen the sad struggles of such imprisoned souls, and heard the despairing wail of anguish when hope at last died out in the sin-crushed heart. It is a sad sight, Edward, and I wonder that there are not more tear-dimmed eyes and breaking hearts than there are in this world of sorrow and suffering." And here the old woman wiped away a tear or two that appeared in her sunken eyes.

"I will never touch a drop of the hateful poison, and I'll fight against the liquor traffic as long as I live. Tom Jones and Dick Johnson violate the law every day. Mr. Cole says that they are two of the most desperate characters in the community, and yet these men are licensed by the law to sell liquor. I cannot understand it, Aunt Jane." And

a thoughtful, puzzled look came over Edward's face.

"There are many things hard to be understood in this world. When you get to be as old as I am, though, you will understand some of life's mysteries better than you do now. But you will not be any happier with the knowledge that you gain by living a few years than you are now. The wisdom that this world imparts is full of sorrow and bitterness."

And saying this, Aunt Jane arose, and walked the little kitchen-floor in a hasty, excited way.

"But there is a better life beyond," replied Edward, in a low voice. "We should live for that, my mother says, and not mind the sorrows of this world. She is always happy and cheerful, even though in the midst of trials and afflictions."

"I know it, I know it," said the old woman. "She looks at the events of life very differently from what I do. She sees beauty and brightness beyond, while I discover no rift in the dark clouds around my pathway. But she has not suffered in the way I have, and perhaps this makes the difference. Her children are spared to comfort her with the sweet words of love and affection, while my once bright-eyed darlings are sleeping in the dust of the valley. It was a darker life-trial than she ever knew, when I saw them perish by the destroyer's hand, and fade away like the sweet summer flowers when blighted by cold, harsh winds. Such a trial as that, I think, would have destroyed her calm, loving, trusting nature, and shaken her religious faith to the very centre."

"Religion rests upon the strong 'rock of ages,'" replied Edward, who under-

stood the great principles of religion far better than did his half-sceptical old aunt. "No storm or tempest can ever shake that," he continued in an earnest voice. "Mother trusts in Jesus, but I am sure that you do not, Aunt Jane; for if you did, you would not talk in such a strange, distrustful way."

"I do not trust in anything, Edward. Everything has proved false to me, and I think that there is nothing worth trusting in. Yet I have wished that I had such a loving, trusting soul as Mary has." And here a long sigh came from Aunt Jane's lips.

Edward would have answered, but he understood by his aunt's actions that she did not wish to continue the conversation; so he remained silent, secretly wishing that the lonely, distrusting old woman would learn the sweet lesson of faith in Jesus from his own dear mother.

A half-hour passed away in silence, which at last was broken by a faint call from the room of Mrs. Mason. It sounded like a voice far away in the distance, and Edward could hardly believe that it really came from his mother's lips. But he hastened into the little bed-room, and, as the lamp-light fell upon his mother's face, he was startled at the ghastly look that rested upon it.

The sick woman reached out her white hand, which Edward grasped at once, and then she said, in the same strange, hollow voice:

"I shall not remain long with you, Edward, and the little that I have to say to you must be said now. You are partially prepared for the change that must shortly come over the old home; but Maggie knows nothing about the loneliness that the death angel ever

brings. Watch over your little sister, and cheer her heart with your love and sympathy. The shadow will soon pass away that shall darken her quiet child-life, but still she will need your love and protection. Aunt Jane will take you both to her little home, and care for you as far as possible. It would be better for her to come here and remain with you, but she is strongly attached to the lonely cottage upon the hill; and then he, your father, will not molest you so much. Be kind and obedient to my poor, unfortunate sister, and strive to lead her to the rock of ages — Christ Jesus."

This was said in a low whisper, for the mother's voice seemed to be growing weaker and weaker, and her strength was fast departing. Aunt Jane might have heard the last sentence, however; but if she did, she did not betray any

emotion. Her face wore the same restless look as she appeared to be gazing out upon the glory of the beauteous summer evening. Perhaps the old woman was half convinced that there really was a blessed reality in the religion of Jesus; yet she clung to her faithlessness in such a trust, even while her sister was dying so happy in a Saviour's love. No wonder that the poor woman was half deranged at times, while bearing her heavy life-burdens without the help of Jesus, the divine Helper.

"If she trusted in Jesus," continued the dying woman, "I should feel much better about leaving my children in her care; yet I think that you are a Christian, Edward, although only fifteen summers have left their traces upon your face. You must teach her and Maggie the grand principles of religion, and cling to them yourself with all your

might and power. While you trust in Jesus, you are safe, even in a world of sin and temptation; but I could not leave you so willingly if you had not learned of Him who never suffers his children to be tempted above what they are able to bear. You will never, never touch a drop of anything that can intoxicate, or linger in the places where temptation exists."

"Never," replied the boy, in a low, firm voice.

"Perhaps God will in some way gratify the darling wish of your heart—to complete in some degree your limited education, so that you can take your true position in the world. Work and trust in Jesus, my boy, and you will certainly win. Perhaps your father will yet learn to trust in the strong Friend; if so, he will yet overcome the enemy, and wear the victor's crown. Work for

this also, Edward, remembering that 'working and winning' go hand in hand."

Here the mother seemed to lose her powers of speech, and so she turned her head upon the white pillow, and unconsciousness soon came over her. Edward still grasped the thin, cold fingers, while his hot tears fell upon them.

"I will go for Mrs. Cole," he said after a little while.

Aunt Jane bowed her head, and quietly took her place in the low chair by the bedside. He soon returned, and was followed by his employer's wife, who was a kind, Christian woman; and together they watched as the summer night wore away.

"Disease is finishing its work rather suddenly," whispered Mrs. Cole to the sister of the dying woman.

"If he had only kept away, she might

have lived several days longer," was the quick reply.

The night passed slowly away to the faithful watchers, and they could discover no perceptible change in the unconscious woman. But just as the stillness of the night was broken by the sweet songs of the morning birds, the eyes were suddenly unclosed, and the cold hand extended for something. Mrs. Cole guessed what the mother wished for, and little Maggie was brought from her crib, and placed close by the form that was growing cold in death.

"Kiss Maggie, mamma," the child said, placing her red, warm lips against the cold ones of her mother.

One long, clinging kiss was left upon the child's sinless lips, and the little one was laid away again upon her pillow. Then the hands of Aunt Jane and Edward were grasped for a moment by

the stiff, white fingers, and a sweet, trusting smile came over the mother's face. Once more she raised her hand and pointed upward, and then the freed spirit went up among the pale morning stars to rejoice for ever in heaven's eternal day.

"Home at last," whispered Mrs. Cole to the tearless old woman by her side. But there was no answer, save a sob from the lips of Edward.

"There will be no sorrow or crying there," Mrs. Cole said again; "and the rest of heaven will be wondrous sweet to her earth-weary soul."

No answer came, for the seal of silence seemed to rest upon the lips of Aunt Jane.

The day following there was a strange, unusual hush in the little cottage upon the lawn at the foot of the hill. As it was only a little distance from the vil-

lage, there were many visitors who came that day to look upon the white face of the dead; yet, strange to say, they did not break the deep silence of the lawn cottage. They walked in and out so softly that little Maggie was mystified by the unusual ways of the visitors. Poor child! she did not understand the great mystery of death.

But there was one visitor, who came as the sun was sinking down behind the western hills, who was not so calm and unmoved as the others had been. He opened the door very softly, and was calm and composed until he lifted the white sheet that covered the dead form of his own true, faithful wife; then his bloated form became convulsed with emotion, and scalding tears ran down his rough face.

"Poor Mary! poor Mary!" he moaned aloud.

'See the work of your own hands, Jacob Mason," said a voice in cold, unpitying tones by his side.

He started as a human voice fell upon his ear, and turned quickly away as he saw his wife's sister watching him with the old, strange light burning in her eyes.

"Don't reproach me, Aunt Jane," he only said, passing out of the little room. But the old woman had no pity for him, even though she betrayed a deep affection for the two motherless children; and so she said again:

"You might do better if you would, Jacob Mason, but you never will; so keep away from your children in the future."

She seemed far more unfeeling and uncharitable than when she had talked about the poor, wretched man to Edward the previous evening. The scene

that she had witnessed did not make her any more pitying and forgiving.

The weeping man was about to pass out of the house, when one low word caught his ear, which arrested him at once. It was only "papa," yet it acted like a charm upon him; for he turned about, and took the little girl in his arms and pressed her lovingly to his heart. She folded her soft arms around his neck, and smoothed the tangled mass of hair that fell over his brow.

"Kiss Maggie," she said, in the same low voice in which she had spoken to the dying mother.

"Yes, darling," he said, pressing his rough, polluted lips to the sweet, pure face.

In a moment more he was walking swiftly toward the village.

"I wish that Aunt Jane would not speak to him in such a way," said

Edward to Mrs. Cole, who still kindly remained with the mourners.

"She had better be kind to him," answered Mrs. Cole; "but she is in one of her unfeeling moods to-day, and so it is no wonder."

"She is good to us, but strangely unkind to him. I wish that she were a Christian, and then she would always be kind," said Edward a little sorrowfully.

CHAPTER III.

THE HILL COTTAGE.

"Life is only bright when it proceedeth
Toward a truer, deeper life above;
Human love is sweetest when it leadeth
To a more divine and perfect love."

FTER Mrs. Mason was laid away in the green, rural churchyard of N——, the little lawn cottage was vacated, and Aunt Jane returned to her home, accompanied by Edward and Maggie. The plain household furniture which belonged to the drunkard's home was removed, and all placed in the "spare room" of the "hill cottage."

The home of Aunt Jane was generally called by the villagers of N—— the "hill cottage," because it stood upon the

highest elevation of land anywhere around the busy hamlet. It was an out-of-the-way place at best; for only a wood-path extended over the hill where the lonely house stood. The "wood-choppers" in the winter season, when the road or path was passable, were the only ones that ever went past the home of Aunt Jane; and the old woman, who seemed to glory in her seclusion, was allowed to live unmolested in her lonely retreat. Yet, in spite of the seclusion of the hill cottage, it was really a beautiful retreat in the long, bright days of summer; and in the golden light of autumn, it was a place where the eyes could feast upon a scene of bewildering glory. People called the place "lonely," because it was so remote from other habitations; while, in fact, it never was gloomy only when the huge snow-drifts of winter were heaped upon the hillside.

Nature had truly lavished her princely offerings very generously upon the beautiful hill, as well as upon the lawn at its base and the plains and wood-lands that stretched out beyond. Perhaps it might have been termed "lonely" because only one quiet human being had lived in the cottage, and alone had enjoyed the grand beauty of nature's loveliness. Almost any place may be made gloomy by the absence of dancing feet and happy, ringing voices. A sad, sorrowful face will often rob a whole homestead of its beauty and brightness, and drive away all signs of life and happiness; while one cheerful, hopeful soul will diffuse a halo of peace and sweetness wherever it chances to be.

Strange to say, Aunt Jane, with all her faults, loved flowers, and so, of course, these spotless gems of purity were found around the hill cottage. In

spite of her years, the old woman had worked in her flower garden each springtime and summer, until the little yard in front of the house presented many a floral treasure. She must have cultivated flowers for her own benefit, as it was seldom that other eyes feasted upon their loveliness.

It was a grand summer morning when Edward and Maggie walked along the grassy wood-path that led to the home of Aunt Jane. Edward was sad in spite of himself; for it was a hard task to leave the old home, where so many happy as well as lonely hours had been passed. It had been brightened by the presence of a true Christian mother, who had mysteriously disappeared, and was now sleeping beneath the dust of the valley. The change had come so suddenly that even the brave, thoughtful Edward could hardly yet

comprehend it all, and the events of the past week seemed more like a dream than a reality; yet he knew that it was *real*, and so he resolved to act as manfully as possible, and meet the future with all the firmness and resolution of his nature.

Little Maggie was strangely silent during the scene of the past days, understanding that some great event had happened, and yet not comprehending fully the nature of it. She watched every movement, and yet did not talk in her simple, childlike way of the passing events. There was a wondering look upon her childish face when her mother was borne away to the grave. She did not notice the white kitten and lambkin, or even the playful dog, during these mysterious days. She yielded to the solemnity of the occasion, while she did not comprehend its hidden meaning.

"How pretty the birds sing this morning!" said Edward to his sister, as they journeyed up the long, slanting hill, accompanied by Carlo and the white lamb. The kitten would not follow its mistress so obediently as the other household pets, and so Edward had carried it in his arms the day before to its future home.

The little girl did not reply, and Edward said again: "I guess 'Kitty White' will be glad to see us this morning."

At the thought of again caressing the cherished pet kitten, a smile really came over the child's face, and she ran swiftly out of the path to gather some golden dandelions and white daisies.

"Aunt Jane has got some prettier flowers than they are," said Edward again to the silent little sister.

"I know it," she replied; "but I shall keep these two to put with them."

"How funny a bouquet will look with dandelions and white daisies in it!" said Edward, laughing in his old way: "Don't you think that the roses and pinks will be ashamed of these plain little field flowers, Maggie?"

"I don't care if they are," replied the sister, half indignantly. "I love the daisies and dandelions just as well as pinks and roses."

"That is all right," said Edward, gathering a handful of the dandelions himself. "If Maggie thinks so much of field flowers, I guess she will like to see the pretty mosses that grow in the woods just back of Aunt Jane's house. We will go there some day when I do not have to work in Mr. Cole's store. Then, there are many tall maple-trees, all growing so closely together that the hot sunbeams cannot reach the ground. It is so cool and shady there that I

know we shall like to go often to the woods."

"Can't we go to-day?" enquired the child eagerly.

"I guess we can. If Mr. Cole can spare me, I will remain at our new home, and we will go into the wood," answered the brother.

After this, Maggie appeared quite like herself, and skipped along very playfully, followed wherever she went by Carlo or the lamb. Soon the brother and sister reached their new home, and were kindly greeted at the door by Aunt Jane, who, when disposed, could be really kind and affectionate to everybody.

"You will go into the other room until I get breakfast ready," said the old woman, opening the door to admit them.

The children were a little surprised to find the furniture which belonged to

their mother's home all nicely arranged, very much as it had been in their own little kitchen.

"How kind Aunt Jane is to arrange our things so finely!" said Edward, seating himself in his mother's rocking-chair that stood by the open window.

But Maggie had found her kitten, which was loudly purring in the little girl's arms, and so she did not notice her brother's words.

"Aunt Jane has got the start of us; for here is a bouquet already gathered, and arranged in perfect order. So what will become of your dandelions and daisies now, Miss Maggie?" asked Edward, pointing to a vase of the sweet garden flowers.

"They are gone. I guess I lost them," answered Maggie, looking in vain for the absent flowers.

"You must be more careful of your

treasures in the future, little sister," said Edward, just as the door opened, and Aunt Jane appeared to tell them breakfast was ready.

"This is a pretty late breakfast, Edward," said Aunt Jane, as they all seated themselves by the rude pine table.

"Yes," he replied; "and I guess that I shall have to get a little earlier start in the morning when I go back to the store. It is quite a walk to the village; but one consoling thought is, it is 'down-hill' most of the way."

"But 'up-hill' nearly all of the way back," said Aunt Jane, who now seemed disposed to be talkative.

"Yes, but I can take my own time for returning; and then, it will be a very pleasant walk in the early evening. The worst job will be to get down to the village and back in the winter-time. Why, this road is sometimes blockaded

entirely for a whole week." And Edward seemed to be a little puzzled.

"We can all move down to the other house," observed the old woman thoughtfully.

"Yes, we might do that," replied the boy, as a light broke over his face. "But perhaps father will occupy it then."

"I guess he would not remain there long without any bed or stove. He will undoubtedly stay up to Dick Johnson's as choreman or something else. May be he will find quarters in some other den of iniquity, as he generally does."

"Perhaps father will reform, and lead a different life by the time winter comes. I shall work for it, and pray for him every day."

"You have more faith in prayer than I do, if you spend your time in praying for him. Why, he is not much better

off now than lost and ruined for ever. I don't think anybody would miss him very much if he should never show his face here again." And Aunt Jane seemed to be losing her quiet, gentle ways.

"I should miss him, and feel very sadly, if he never came back again. Since mother bade me work for his redemption, I feel greatly encouraged that it may be brought about in spite of the sad truths that he has a strong appetite for liquor, and is easily led astray by wicked men. Mother's last words were, 'Working and winning go hand in hand.' I shall remember them as long as I live, and, if I wish to win, I must work. I want to save father, and then gain a better education; and I shall work with all my might for these objects." And Edward's voice suddenly became firm and decided.

"May be you will succeed in getting

knowledge, but I think you will fail in saving him," said the old woman, betraying signs that the subject was becoming distasteful to her.

A long sigh came from Edward's lips, as he thought how much Aunt Jane might help him if she only would; but he said nothing more to the now silent old woman. All day the faithful brother amused the little girl, talking to her about the birds and flowers, and telling simple stories which she could understand.

"You will have to play with Carlo and Kitty to-morrow," he said, as they all were about to retire for the night. "I must go early in the morning to Mr. Cole's; but I will come back as soon as possible."

The child did not reply, but looked longingly down toward the old home that they had vacated in the morning.

"Eddie, can't we go home and stay to-night, you and I, and sleep in mamma's room, just as we did last night?" asked the little girl earnestly.

"But the beds have been brought here to-day; and don't you see your little crib in Aunt Jane's sleeping-room yonder?" answered Edward, greatly moved at the child's request.

"But we stayed there last night, Eddie," said the child quickly, while a saddened look came over her face.

"Yes, for we had not moved the beds and your little crib. We thought that we would not bring them until to-day. Everything else we brought yesterday, you know, and now there is nothing left in the house. We can sleep just as well up here." And Edward kissed the little red cheeks lovingly.

"Can we have prayers, Aunt Jane?" asked Edward, half hesitatingly—"that

is, Maggie and me, if you do not care to join us."

The old woman turned partially away, saying something that Edward could not understand, but adding in a louder voice, "You can pray as much as you wish, I suppose." And then she went out of the room.

Edward read a few verses from his mother's Bible, which he found upon the stand, and then knelt down and asked God to bless his father, Maggie, and Aunt Jane, and lead them all up to a better life. It was a brief prayer, yet it came from the heart of the boy Christian, who had so much faith in the promises of God. Oh! the power there is in simple, childlike faith.

Aunt Jane must have heard the little prayer, for she was seated close by the door in the adjoining room. There might have been strange emotions with-

in her soul as she saw herself near the end of life's journey, a faithless, unbelieving old woman, and a stranger to the grand principles that seemed to radiate the pathway of one who had only beheld the light and shadow of fifteen years. A poor faithless old woman she truly was, nearing the death-land, and bearing the burdens of years in her own weak human strength.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW WORK.

"Undepressed by seeming failure,
Unelated by success,
Heights attained by honest efforts,
Onward, upward ever press."

EARLY the next morning, Edward arose from his bed, and went gently down the narrow stairway, thinking that Aunt Jane and Maggie were yet fast asleep in the bed-room just out of the kitchen. But he was somewhat surprised to find the old woman quietly preparing breakfast.

"What made you get up so early, Aunt Jane?" Edward asked, looking at the table, all nicely arranged for the morning meal.

"Why, to have your breakfast in readiness at the proper time. You do not want to go to your day's work with an empty stomach, do you?" enquired Aunt Jane, very innocently.

"I expected to get my own breakfast, Aunt Jane. It is really too bad to make you get up so early."

"Nobody makes me do this, Edward. I do it by my own free will, and I am sure that it is not so hard a task for me to prepare a warm breakfast for you as it would be if you were obliged to take a cold one. Why, Edward, I am accustomed to early rising. I don't believe in wasting these grand morning hours in bed. 'Nights are long enough to sleep,' is a true saying." And the old woman bustled around with new activity, and soon the morning meal was upon the table.

"Maggie will have to eat her break-

fast alone, I guess," said Aunt Jane, as she and Edward took their places at the table. "But it is better for her to sleep away the morning hours, if she can. The day will be long enough at best."

"I wish that I could remain at home a few days until she gets used to living here. But it will not answer for me to remain idle any longer." And a half-sorrowful look came over Edward's face.

"I will tell you what to do, Edward," said Aunt Jane, while a light came suddenly over her face. "Just call at Mrs. Smith's, and ask her if she will not let Annie come up and play with your little sister to-day."

"I should never have thought of that plan, Aunt Jane. It is a grand one, however, for Maggie and Annie are firm friends, and they always get along very finely together."

The sorrowful look had all disappeared

from the boy's face, and he took his hat, and started very cheerfully upon his journey.

It was a very pleasant walk down the long, slanting hill, and the soul of the Christian boy was strangely moved at the holy glory of that sweet summer morning. Every voice of nature seemed to be ascending up to God in praise and gratitude, and one general hymn of thanksgiving was filling the grand outdoor temple of the great All-Father.

There was a new light in the boy's eyes as he reached the plain at the base of the hill, and pure, holy emotions were strangely at work in his soul. No wonder that the dying mother was not afraid to leave him, even in a world of sin and temptation.

Edward called at Mrs. Smith's, and readily obtained her consent to allow her little girl to spend the day at the

hill cottage. Then he hurried to the large store of Mr. Cole, where he found the kind merchant already engaged in looking over his ledger.

Mr. Cole bade him a cheerful "good-morning," and then said:

"Before you begin the duties of the day, I wish to see you alone in my office."

Edward secretly wondered what the object of a private interview could be; but he simply said, "Yes, sir," and quietly seated himself to wait until the merchant should be at liberty.

Only one of the clerks had yet arrived, although there were three employed in the store besides Edward. Perhaps Edward would not have been termed a clerk in the general sense of the word; for he really was only a store-boy, performing all kinds of odd jobs at the bidding of others, and making himself

generally useful. He was faithful and obedient, and as capable of occupying a higher and more responsible position as some of the other hands; yet he did not covet the places of the more favored ones, but humbly performed all the duties, however trifling, that awaited him. He was never actuated by a false ambition or worldly pride, but cheerfully bore the humble part in his lowly sphere.

Soon Mr. Cole put down his pen, and started for the little room known as his private office. It was not really an office, but simply a little sitting-room and library combined, where the merchant could rest when the cares of business pressed too heavily, and where he could engage in confidential talks with any who wished to converse with him alone.

There were a sofa, three or four chairs,

a large number of books, and a few old ledgers stowed away in a glass case in one corner of the room.

"I wish to have a little talk with you in regard to various matters," said the merchant, seating himself upon the sofa.

"You have been faithful and obedient since I have employed you," continued the merchant, "and I have been thinking of either increasing your wages or placing you in a different position. Young Blake, I am afraid, is not working for my interest as he should be; and, unless he does better, I shall be obliged to dismiss him from my store. I am afraid that he is going down-hill at a rapid rate. I have detected the fumes of liquor about him more than once; and I half suspect that he spends much of his time that should be passed in sleep in some of those low drinking-saloons that are termed 'hotels.' It is too bad,

for Joel might be a worthy young man, and fill a high position in the world. But the truth is too evident that he is going to ruin. I had a long and serious talk with him yesterday morning, and he promised to do better. The next time I discover that he is under the influence of liquor, I shall dismiss him at once, and you will take his place. Until there is a better position for you, I shall advance your wages ten dollars each month."

"You are very kind to me, Mr. Cole, and I feel deeply grateful to you for what you have done for me. I do not know what would have become of us if you had not given me employment. I will ever try to merit your respect and confidence. But I hope that Joel will do better in the future, and remain in his place." And the grateful look that had rested upon Edward's face was changed for a sorrowful one.

"I hope so, too; but I am afraid that he will not do any better. The fact is, he is led onward by a set of wild, reckless fellows, who have perfect control over him; and the restraining influences at home and elsewhere are not sufficient to check him in his course of folly. This little village is not noted for its morality or advancement in the temperance reform that is progressing in many other places. The sad results of intemperance are seen all around us, for there are many young men that are going to ruin. Poor Joel makes only one of the number."

"Can there not be something done to stop this sad work?" asked Edward earnestly.

"There ought to be an effort made in some way for this object," replied Mr. Cole. "But what measures should be adopted I am yet unable to say. It

would not do any good to circulate a temperance pledge as long as the people at large are so blinded to the fearful results of these false drinking customs. If they could be aroused once, and fully understand their true position, almost any plan would work; but the great trouble is to get them 'waked up.' There are many men in this village, who are not drunkards themselves, that are strangely indifferent to duty in this respect, and so dream the time away that should be employed in earnest action. I might have been among this number had not Joel's case come so directly under my observation. It is a sad sight to see a young man of his abilities dragged to ruin by these evil influences. If we could have a few temperance lectures and temperance sermons to show up this evil in its true light, we might possibly begin the work. There

is to be a new pastor employed by one of our churches, and I hope that he, at least, will be a temperance man."

"Are not the other ministers temperance men?" enquired Edward, with surprise.

"I think not," was the answer. "If they are, they do not either of them ever say a word for the cause. Perhaps they do not wish to offend the sensitive public ear, and so they remain silent upon this subject."

"A minister of the Gospel ought to preach the truth, whether it offends or not," said Edward earnestly.

"But they do not always, Edward. Sometimes they remain strangely silent when this sad evil stares them in the very face." And saying this, Mr. Cole arose to go into the store.

Edward went also into the large saleroom, and began to sweep the floor of

the same—a duty that always awaited him in the morning. While picking up some papers that lay upon the floor, he discovered one that attracted his attention at once. It was not folded, so he glanced at the few words that were written upon it, to see if it were anything that should be preserved. He was greatly surprised to find the following words upon it:

"DEAR JO: We are a-going to have a 'regular time' at Johnson's to-night. Dick has got a new supply of the very best kinds of wines and liquors. Come early, and bring all the money you have. If you have not much about you, just help yourself to some out of the money-till.

"In haste, SAM."

Edward was completely bewildered at the words he had just read, and again he glanced over them to see if he had real-

ly understood them rightly. But they all appeared just the same; and their terrible meaning could not be concealed by the desire to understand it in some other way.

The boy's head became very dizzy, and a strange sickness came over him. He might have fallen to the floor, had not Mr. Cole caught a glimpse of his pale face, and sprang to his assistance.

The paper fell from the hands of Edward, which Mr. Cole picked up and read. His face also became pale, but it was more from anger than from surprise and pity.

"So the young rascal can steal as well as drink and carouse!" exclaimed Mr. Cole, in an excited way. "I shall look into this matter at once."

"Perhaps he did not take the money," said Edward, in a strange, unnatural voice; "and perhaps he has never taken

any. The little note does not prove the fact; it only contained the vile suggestion."

"In a legal point of view, the note proves nothing; but to my own mind, it clearly reveals the fact that young Blake has been in the habit of taking money from the till. I shall at once dismiss him from the place he has occupied, and acquaint his father with the whole facts. He has not made his appearance yet, for he undoubtedly is sleeping off the effects of last night's carousal." And here the excited man walked away.

It was a sad, lonely day to Edward, in spite of the change that awaited him. In his pity for Joel, he had forgotten the holy inspirations of his quiet morning walk. He wore a sorrowful look upon his face all day, and many times each hour he asked, "Cannot poor Joel be saved?"

But he did not ask this question aloud, so no answer came back to him.

"I shall work for his redemption also; and, if working and winning really go hand in hand, I may perhaps save an immortal soul from death," he said, as he walked up the long hill before the shadows of evening had fairly begun to obscure the landscape. Maggie was waiting for him, and it seemed a sweet relief to the weary brother to kiss the pure face. That night, as he knelt in prayer, he prayed very earnestly for his erring friend Joel, and also for the downfall of intemperance in the village of N——.

CHAPTER V.

THE SICK FRIEND.

"And the night cometh chill with dew;
O Father! let thy light break through."

THE next morning, as Edward entered the store of Mr. Cole, he noticed that the merchant appeared unusually thoughtful and silent, and in a little while it was known by all the clerks that Joel Blake was very sick, and that the physician thought, unless there was a change for the better very soon, that he could not recover.

"The fact is," said Mr. Cole to Ed-

ward, "the 'spree' they all had up at Johnson's was too much for the frail constitution of Joel. They all drank and caroused until nearly morning, and the result is that poor Joel was strangely and suddenly stricken down with a terrible fever, which is now making sad ravages upon his physical powers. His sufferings are intense, and he seems to be in one continual state of delirium. It was truly a hard task for me to stand by his bedside, for a few moments only, and hear his confessions of misdeeds and the sorrowful words of regret that came from his lips. Poor boy! if his words are true, he is far more guilty than we ever dreamed. It is a sad blow to his father, for he did not know anything about the habits of his son. He had so much confidence in his boy that he did not dream that he could be led astray. The old man has

been strangely blinded to the evils of the liquor traffic and the power of appetite. He has always kept cider, beer, and wine in his cellar, and his boy learned to love strong drink in his own father's house. Will human beings ever learn that it is not safe to caress the deadly reptile—alcohol?"

"I am very sorry for Joel," said Edward, in a low voice. "I sincerely hope and pray that he may recover from his illness, and then lead a better life. He is a kind-hearted fellow, in spite of his failings, and it seems almost impossible that he ever stooped to perform such wicked deeds. If it is really true, I am sure that he has been led into evil by others.

"Yes, he undoubtedly has had help in walking the downward path. When a human being yields to be led by wicked hands, there are always plenty

of them to drag the weak one along toward ruin. The tempter keeps his willing slaves watching like spies all along the life-paths of others to do his vile work. No wonder that so many are lost, when dangerous traps and pitfalls, prepared by human hands, are hidden thickly along their pathway. Joel was drawn into the great vortex of sin, just as thousands of other young men have been; but I am sadly afraid that if he lives, and succeeds in tearing himself away from his evil companions, the terrible, deadly curse of the appetite for strong drink will still cast its strange spell over him. I have been informed that even from a child he has drunk the deadly poison in the form of beer, wine, and cider. But these drinks, it appears, are becoming too weak to satisfy his appetite, and so he goes to Johnson's for rum, whiskey, and brandy. Strange

how blinded his father has been through the long years!"

Edward did not reply to this, for he was too busily engaged in thinking. All day his thoughts were upon poor Joel and the sad facts connected with his illness. He was filling the position that his sick friend had occupied, and yet his own good-luck in obtaining it was no balm to the secret heartache that came over him. Joel was only two years older than himself, and yet had become a poor dissipated youth; his prospects of a useful manhood all blighted, and the seeds of vice already springing up in his soul, bearing their bitter fruit. Yet in spite of the difference existing in the lives of these two boys, there had been a warm friendship between them for the two years that they had been employed by Mr. Cole. Strange to say, Joel had never by word

or deed sought to lead his friend Edward along with himself in the paths of sin. Perhaps he had too much honor to drag such a true, manly boy as he knew his friend to be down with him; and yet it might have been because he thought that he should not succeed in the effort. It was very evident that he tried to hide as far as possible his misdoings from Edward, and had succeeded well in his attempts, until the events of the past few days had been brought to light.

"If Joel does not die, I am sure that he will live a better life," said Edward many times to himself that day; and once he observed to Mr. Cole: "We must do all we can to save Joel, if he gets well again."

"What can we do?" asked the merchant, shaking his head a little doubtfully.

"Why, ask him to turn over a new leaf, as the old saying is, and, if he tries to do better, give him back his place in the store, and then encourage him in every possible way," replied Edward, in a very hopeful voice.

"He will have to show true signs of repentance before he can return here. We should look out for one who has been a thief, and not place him where he will be tempted to adopt his old practices. You have more faith in humankind than I have, simply because you have not lived so long in the world. I am afraid that, in spite of the sad lesson that Joel has received, he will do no better. When the seeds of vice are once sown in the soul, it is no easy task to keep them from springing up and bearing their bitter fruit. Then, a love for strong drink has already possessed the poor fellow, and I see but little chance

for his escape; yet, if it was possible to save him, I certainly would do all in my power to bring it about."

"The last words of my mother were, 'Working and winning go hand in hand.' And if this is true, we can save Joel if we work for his redemption." And a meaning light gleamed in the boy's eyes.

"Your mother had great faith in kind words and good deeds, or rather, in the religion of Jesus. If we all had her simple, trusting faith in God, there would be more souls saved than there are, and more kept from the ways of evil. Yet she did not live to see him, her husband, saved. This proves that there are souls that cannot be reached by faith, prayers, and tears." And here a sorrowful look came over the speaker's face.

"Her prayers for him may be an-

swered yet," answered Edward quickly. "God's ways are not our ways, you know. Father has wandered far away from the Good Shepherd, yet even he may return again. He was deeply affected the day when mother died; and the last time I saw him, there were sad tears streaming down his face. I never saw him weep before, and I am sure that the good angels were whispering in his ears. It was a little strange that he should go away that day, even before she was laid in the grave. Perhaps he went away to reform, and he may even now be living a better life. I shall hope and pray that he may be saved, just as long as we both live."

Here the conversation ended, but the same thinking went onward in the boy's soul. He was evidently laying plans for future work; for occasionally the old look of determination would flash from his

eyes, and then the calm light of trust and hopefulness would beam over the manly face of the Christian boy.

"Just like his mother," Mr. Cole often said, when speaking of Edward, and then would generally add: "I wish that I possessed so much faith in God and in good works as he does."

Strange that the Christian boy of fifteen summers should understand the great principles of faith and religion better than did the man who had walked the earth for half a century. But a praying mother had taught the boy the beautiful lessons of faith and trust in Jesus, while the man of fifty years had only learned in the school of common experience.

That night, after the duties of the day were all ended, Edward went directly to the home of Joel Blake, and knocked softly at the door. He was admitted by

Mr. Blake himself, whose face still wore the deep traces of sorrow.

"Walk in," he said, as he extended his trembling hand toward the visitor. "It can do no harm," he continued, seeing that Edward hesitated. "Joel is unconscious, and does not recognize any one, not even myself. He does not seem to suffer so much pain as he did this morning, but his mind wanders yet. We only admit his particular friends, for we do not care to have the curious ones hear the strange words he speaks. Mr. Cole has undoubtedly told the sad story to you." And here the tears came into the father's eyes.

Softly Edward followed Mr. Blake into the chamber of the sick boy, just to look upon the face of his friend for a moment; and, strange to say, Joel looked up, and feebly reached out his hand.

"Come nearer, Edward," he said, in a whisper.

A look of hope came over the father's face, and he turned away to hide his emotions.

"Do not try to talk, Joel," said Edward, bending over the white face. "Do not say a word, for you are too sick to talk. I will come some day when you are better." And saying this, the visitor unloosed the fingers that clasped his hand.

"Come soon," Joel said very earnestly; and then he fell into a quiet sleep.

"He sleeps natural at last," said Mr. Blake, in a whisper; and the thick tears of gratitude fell down from his cheeks. "Come just as soon as he is well enough to talk," he said to Edward, who walked swiftly away from the house, thinking, hoping, and praying.

A new field of labor seemed to be

opening before the boy, who was so anxious to do good in the world. He saw that there was work for him to do outside of the little home circle, and he resolved again and again to cheerfully perform it. Had the same spirit of love and labor actuated the souls of those who professed to be Christians in the little village of N——, there would not have been so many wanderers in the paths of sin and folly.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

"When the poor heart with anguish learns
That earthly props resigned must be,
And from each broken cistern turns,
It hears the accents, Come to me."

EVERAL days passed by, and Joel still lingered upon the verge of the shadowy land. Every day Edward called to enquire after him, but, as he was too weak and sick to talk, it was thought best not to allow any visitors to enter the room. His life seemed to hang upon a very brittle thread, and it was feared that, if he became excited in any way, the feeble

light might go entirely out, and leave nothing but cold, senseless clay.

The sick boy seemed to understand his true position, and so remained very quiet and silent. Once he asked for Edward, but, as the physician shook his head, the request was not repeated. At last the burning fever left him entirely; and, although he was still very weak, he was pronounced "out of danger" by the physician.

"But you must keep very quiet for a long time yet, and avoid all exciting scenes. Above all things, my boy," the good doctor continued, "never go back to your old companions again, nor touch a drop of anything that can intoxicate. Your constitution is too frail to bear up under the effects of strong drink and the exciting scenes of a dissipated life. Your nervous system is but little better than a wreck now; and unless you live

a very quiet, temperate life, you will certainly go down to the grave in the early years of your manhood. A few words of warning may save you, if you heed them. So be wise, my boy."

"I will try and heed your warning, sir," Joel replied in a low voice. "I wish very much to live, and to do better in the future. I shall try earnestly to live a better life." And here a long sigh came from the pale lips.

"You had better remove these 'light drinks,' as you term them, from your cellar, Mr. Blake," the doctor said to the father of Joel. "Total abstinence is the only rule that your boy can safely adopt, and so I would advise you to remove all beyond his reach that can possibly tempt him back to his old ways."

"Do you think that there is any danger of my boy becoming a drunk-

ard?" asked the father, in a half-offended tone.

"No, for he could not live to become a drunkard, in the sense that people generally understand the word. A few more 'sprees' like the one he passed through just before he was sick will finish him," answered the plain-hearted doctor.

"I have always regarded wine and cider as very harmless drinks, doctor, and I fail to see the need of removing them from my boy," said Mr. Blake very slowly.

"But I see the need of it, Mr. Blake; and I repeat again, that total abstinence is the only rule for your boy to adopt. If you allow him to meddle with these little serpents, he will soon be in the meshes of a larger one that will crush out his life. I only say this to warn you of the danger that threatens your

son. He may be saved, if you heed my warning; but he will be lost, if you do not."

"I did not know that you were an advocate of total abstinence before, Dr. Ray. We knew that Mr. Cole was a believer in it; but we thought that you had too much common sense to become a fanatic. I do not see why you think that my son is in any more danger than other young men. It is true that in some way he became associated with a class of reckless young men, who have led him deeply into sin; but I see no danger in allowing him to partake of such harmless drinks as wine, beer, and cider. Why, I think, if he has an appetite for strong drink, this will be a capital way to keep him from drinking rum and whiskey. I shall keep an eye upon him in the future, and guard him, as far as possible, from temptation."

And the father spoke in a way which proved to the doctor that further arguments would do no good.

"I am sorry to hear you talk in this way, Mr. Blake, for I see just how it will end. You do not understand the physical nature of your boy, nor the power of the appetite that will yet prove his ruin. You may call me a temperance fanatic, if you will, because I have faithfully warned you of danger. If you do not heed my suggestions, you will become one yourself some time, but it will not be until after Joel is laid away in the grave." And here Dr. Ray hastily walked out of the room.

"What has come over good Dr. Ray?" said Mr. Blake aloud; but as he was alone, no answer came to his ears. "He must be growing crazy, to think that my boy is in danger of dying a drunken sot. Indeed, it would be a fine opera-

tion for me to dispose of my wine, cider, and beer, and then acknowledge to the world that I was obliged to do this to save my son." But just then the sad thought came to the father that his son had already gained the name of "thief," and with a groan he said again, "This would be no worse than what has really transpired."

That evening, just as the sun was sinking down behind the western hills, Edward came, and was admitted into the room of Joel. He was a little startled at the white, wasted face of his friend, for he was not quite prepared for the change that was visible. A warm grasp of hands, and a few words of greeting, and then Edward seated himself for a talk with his friend. He had waited long and patiently for this opportunity, and was really grateful for the privilege of trying to lead Joel up to a better life.

"I have wished to see you for a long time, Joel," he said, seating himself by the bedside of his friend. "I wanted to tell you that I am still your true friend, and will try in every possible way to help you along in the better path. I am sure that you will try to do right in the future."

"I do not deserve your friendship, Edward, and you will shun my very presence when I tell you the plain, simple truth—I have taken money three different times from you." And here a flush of shame came over the speaker's face.

"I thought I lost it," Edward replied, half doubting the words that came to his ears. "But I will gladly forgive you if you will promise me to lead a better life in the future. Will you try, Joel?"

"You have not heard all of the

shameful story yet," answered Joel, covering his face with his still feeble hands. "Wait until you know all before you ask me to try to do any better. May be you will come to the conclusion that my case is a hopeless one."

"Nobody's case is hopeless if he truly repents and has a desire to lead a better life," answered Edward warmly.

"You did not know how often I was under the influence of liquor," Joel continued, not seeming to heed the remark that Edward had made. "I carried a bottle of brandy with me nearly all of the time; and whenever I left the salesroom of Mr. Cole, I drank a small quantity. I was very careful not to take too much, for fear you would find it out. Every time I took money from the till or from you, I had been drinking brandy. I did not think that I was intoxicated at the time; but I must have been, or I

never should have taken money, as long as father gave it to me so freely. If I had been really in need of it, I might have taken it in my sober moments; but as I generally had a good supply, my brains must have been strangely confused by strong drink. I cannot quite understand it, for I always attended to my duties, and did not make any very serious blunders. I generally gave the right change to customers, and the day-book revealed no very great mistakes. I do not see how I got along so well as I did while working under the inspiration of brandy." And here a perplexed look came over the speaker's face.

"I cannot quite explain the mystery," answered Edward; "but you are very exact in figures, and a ready reckoner. It would require a good deal of brain confusion to overcome the natural talents

that God has given you. Why, Mr. Cole himself cannot excel you in keeping book accounts. It is too bad, Joel, to see such abilities as you have all wasted. I wish that I were as well prepared as you are to engage in mercantile pursuits. Two years of study will not gain for me what you already possess."

"I would very readily change positions in life with you, were it possible. If I possessed your moral firmness and religious faith, I should be far better prepared to live rightly, and to succeed in the world; but as it is, I am afraid that my business talents will not amount to much. You do not know, Edward, how hard it is to resist temptation," said Joel, with a pitiable look resting upon his face.

"No, I presume that I do not rightly understand the nature of your trials," answered Edward; "but I am sure that

you can overcome them if you look to God for help and strength. You can never overcome temptation while you trust in your own strength; but God will help you far more than what you think, if you will only ask him. I know this by my own experience, Joel."

"Yes, I know that you accomplish all that you undertake, but I did not just know the secret of your success before. I thought that it was because you were resolute and not easily discouraged. But tell me how you learned while so young to be a Christian."

"My mother taught me first to trust in God; but since I gave my heart to him, he has led me along by his revealed word and spirit of love. He will lead all who seek to be led by him." And Edward's voice expressed a deeper meaning than did his words.

"I never had a mother to teach me,"

answered Joel, a little bitterly. "She died when I was very young, and father never said much to me about religion. Yet I think that he is a good man, and wishes very much to see me succeed in the world. If mother had lived, perhaps I might have been a better boy."

"I think that, when we depend upon human help alone, we are clinging to a broken reed that nearly always will fail us. My own dear mother helped me very much, but she is now in the grave; and father does not care what becomes of us." And here a sad look came over Edward's face.

"I don't see how you get along as well as you do with so much to contend with. If I had a drunken father and a little sister to support, I should think I had a pretty hard lot; yet you seem to get along with it as you do with every-

thing else. Strange how some people will overcome difficulties!"

"Perhaps I sometimes have more difficulty than you imagine to bear these heavy life-burdens. My way is very dark sometimes; and if I trusted in my own strength, I should certainly give up in despair. But I know that if I work and trust in God, I shall win. Will you not work for your own redemption, Joel, and trust in the same strong Friend?"

"I have felt it to be my duty to lead a different life," was the low answer. "I never listened before to the good voice that sometimes whispered in my ear, for I thought that I could enjoy life far better for many years to come in following my own desires and inclinations. But when the world almost faded from my view, and my hold upon life became so feeble, I resolved to listen to the low voice that spoke so gently to

me; and I will try to lead a better life in the future."

"Then give your heart up wholly to God, and confess your faith in him to the world, and you will be sure to succeed," suggested Edward.

"I think I will see how I succeed in trying to live rightly before I make a public profession of religion," replied Joel, in a hesitating tone of voice.

"I would confess Christ first, Joel, and trust in him for strength to overcome," answered Edward earnestly.

"Perhaps I shall fail entirely, and then people will laugh at my failure. I should much rather remain just as I am than to make a high-sounding profession, and then utterly fail."

"You will not fail, Joel, if you begin rightly; but I am sadly afraid you will if you do not take this very important step of confessing Christ publicly, and

that you will not succeed in your attempts at living a better life. I should rather run the risk of making people laugh than of displeasing God; for I am sure that it is according to his will that we 'come out from the world' and confess him."

"I will try to confess him by good works," replied Joel. "But I will think this matter over, and ask father's advice."

"Ask God to lead you in this matter," said Edward earnestly, as he rose to go. "He will lead you rightly, but human beings may not."

"My father will advise me rightly, I am sure. But come soon, Edward, and talk with me again."

"Yes, I will come again, and will pray earnestly for you until we meet." And saying this, Edward walked out into the deep twilight of the evening toward the cottage on the hill.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW HELPER.

"Under the ice we hide our wrongs—
Under the ice that has chilled us through."

ABOUT a week after Edward's visit to Joel's home, a tall, fine-looking man entered the store of Mr. Cole, and introduced himself as the Rev. Mr. Lee.

"You are the new Pastor of Ross Street church, I suppose," said Mr. Cole, extending his hand to the visitor.

"Yes," was the reply, "and I called to see if I could have a few moments of private conversation with you."

"Certainly, sir," answered the mer-

chant, leading the way to his private reception-room. Edward saw these two men leave the large sales-room together, and he wondered what their business could be in the private office of Mr. Cole.

"I like the looks of the new minister," he said to himself, for he had heard the stranger introduce himself to Mr. Cole, "and I think that he has come upon a good mission." And with this thought, he soon forgot the transaction, until he saw them come out of the little room. "He has made a long call for the first one," the boy thought, as he glanced at the hands of the large clock that stood in one corner of the room, and discovered that it had been just one hour since Mr. Lee entered the store.

"This is Edward Mason, Mr. Lee," said the merchant, leading the visitor to-

ward the boy, who extended his hand, and bowed politely to the young minister. "You will find a faithful advocate of temperance in this young man, Mr. Lee," continued the merchant.

"I am always glad to find the young enlisted in so good a cause," answered Mr. Lee, smiling, as he still held the hand of Edward. "You can help me very much in the work that I feel it my duty to begin at once. Of course, you will help me labor for the promotion of temperance," the minister explained, seeing the half-puzzled look upon Edward's face.

"Yes, sir," answered the boy very quickly, as the truth at last came to his mind.

"Then be at Ross Street church, to-morrow evening, at our temperance meeting." And saying this, Mr. Lee walked out of the store.

"The right minister has come to us at last," said Mr. Cole to Edward after the visitor was out of hearing. "He is very much engaged in the temperance work, and came to me for help to devise some plan of labor. He proposed to devote one Sabbath evening in each month to temperance work, and he will try to obtain the help of the other clergymen in our village. He appears to be a working, resolute man, and I believe he will succeed in his attempts to arouse the people from their death-like sleep in regard to the fearful results of intemperance."

"How glad I am!" said Edward, while a look of gratitude came over his face. "I have been hoping and praying that something would transpire to set the people to thinking. How I wish that Joel Blake could attend the temperance meeting! But I suppose that, if he was able to go, his father would not allow it."

"I should think that Mr. Blake would be willing for Joel to adopt any plan to save himself from becoming a drunkard; but he is blinded yet in regard to duty, and does not dream of danger arising from a love for strong drink. He thinks that if he can prevent his son from going into bad company, this is all he has to do; while really the greatest danger lies in the craving appetite that Joel has for strong drink. He does not dream how he is sustaining and keeping alive the fatal appetite by allowing his son to partake daily of the wine and cider that he keeps in the cellar. They will ruin the boy yet."

"Is Mr. Blake a Christian?" asked Edward in an earnest tone.

"He is not a Christian, as I understand the word, yet I think his name may be found upon a certain church-book in this village. He is not a work-

ing Christian, I am sure; for he is generally indifferent to all good works. But why do you ask, Edward?"

In a few words, Edward related the conversation which had passed between Joel and himself, and his friend's decision in regard to asking his father's advice about making a public profession of religion.

Mr. Cole shook his head, and said, "I am afraid that Joel will still walk in the downward path if he has yielded himself to be led by his father's hand. Poor boy!"

Edward was early at the church upon the evening that the temperance meeting was to be held, and was a little surprised to find it already half filled with people. He did not think that many of the villagers would pay any attention to the brief notice of the meeting that had been written upon a few slips of

paper and left in various portions of the village. But it was something new, and the people came more from curiosity than anything else; so it was not strange that the church should be filled at an early hour. A few real friends of temperance were there, ready to adopt any plan that would be likely to result in good, and among them were Mr. Cole, Dr. Ray, and Edward.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Cole, who was chairman for the evening, and a brief prayer was offered by one of the disinterested ministers who had come at the cordial invitation of Mr. Lee. The chairman then introduced Rev. Mr. Lee, who immediately entered the pulpit and opened his eloquent address.

For one hour did he reason with the people upon the great temperance question, bringing before their vision many

vivid pictures of woe, want, and ruin caused by the unholy liquor traffic. He sustained his arguments with many Bible quotations and with scientific reasoning; and at last requested the privilege of asking a few questions, as he was a stranger to most of his hearers, and also to the village history. He requested any one to answer who could, as he was really desirous of obtaining information. The first question was a startling one, and nobody seemed prepared to answer it.

"How many drunkards have died within the space of five years?" he asked very earnestly.

Several moments passed, while a deep unbroken silence filled the church. No one answered, and the question was repeated.

"I can think of eight," said a feeble voice in a remote part of the building.

"Name them, if you will," said Mr.

Lee, looking to discover the one who had answered him.

An aged woman at once arose, and said:

"There was Thomas Green, James Brown, William Greyson, Miles Gorham, Jack Chaplin, Willard Russel, Henry Williams, and poor Peter. Peter was my husband, stranger, and a good man, too, when he could let liquor alone. He tried a good many times, but always failed. You see, stranger, the fault was not always Peter's, for they were after him like bloodhounds, and he could not resist. He was free-hearted, and never refused to treat the company when he had money. It would have made your heart ache, stranger, to have seen him weep over his weakness when alone with me in our dreary little home. But it did no good to weep when beset with temptation upon every hand." And here

the old woman sat down, unconscious of the fact that she had delivered a thrilling temperance lecture.

"Now, how many have died in this same time whose death may be traced directly or indirectly to strong drink?" was the next question that broke the stillness which filled the old church.

"Perhaps I can answer that question as correctly as any one present," said Dr. Ray, rising very slowly to his feet. "There was young Reed, who was injured so badly in a drunken affray that he died in just two weeks; and Charlie Howard fell from the roof of Mr. Stiles's new barn while under the influence of old cider, and, after suffering a long time, went to the grave in the early years of his manhood. Daniel Morgan, who was an invalid for ten long years, and then died in the almshouse, was made the wretched sufferer that he

was by two or three sprees with dissipated companions in the same old hotel that is now "run" by Dick Johnson. If those old sin-blackened walls could speak, they would tell of many a body and soul ruined by the influences that have existed there for long years. Strong drink is the active principle, the controlling influence, of that old hotel, and the grand basis upon which have rested nine-tenths of the suffering and misery of our people for the last twenty years. But I am digressing, and will return to the subject. There was little Willie Ross, who died from the effects of a cruel blow given to him by a drunken mother; and then you know how she wandered away after he was buried, and perished in a blinding snow-storm. Then poor Mrs. Chapin, you know, died of a broken heart; and Mrs. Williams—but I cannot record her history; so spare me, Mr.

Lee, and let some one else take my place." And here the speaker sat down, and wiped the drops of perspiration from his brow.

Then an aged man arose, whose brow was covered with the seams of something more than time; for the traces of care and sorrow were written all over his face. In a weak voice, he said:

"I will only speak of two, although I might tell of many more; and these two died a score of years ago, so I suppose that the story of their downfall will not be in order." And here the speaker hesitated.

"Tell the story," said Mr. Cole.

"They are both sleeping in the graveyard just out of the village, and the brown stones at the head of each grave that bear their names are covered with moss and already crumbling in ruins. Both of these sleepers were glorious

boys, and full of hope, strength, and activity; but yet they died in the golden morning of manhood: and not as others die who waste away with disease, but they went to their graves poor, wretched, loathsome human beings, clothed with the rags of shame, and shorn of all that makes life beautiful."

Then the trembling voice faltered, and tears ran down the pale, wan face of the speaker. He remained standing, however, and in a few moments continued:

"The hotel was new in those cruel days of their downfall, and they went there to spend their leisure hours. In some way, the new, shining decanters and sparkling wine-glasses charmed them, and the glitter of the serpent eyes within strangely fascinated the boys, and they both fell victims to the dark spirit that lurked in the wine. Poor boys! they did not dream of danger

until it was too late. It was a hard matter to lay them away in the old graveyard, and then mourn over broken tablets and withered flowers for a lifetime. Stranger, those two sleepers in the graveyard are my boys—the only two God ever gave me." And then a low wail of misery came from the great depths of the father's soul. "I will only say a few more words," he continued. "I have seen other boys, as pure and manly as my own, fall all along the wayside of these twenty years, and yet the sad work goes on. The old hotel bears the marks of decay; for it could not well sustain the wild, stormy scenes of a score of years, and not shake and tremble as vice and crime dwelt beneath its roof. How long, how long will people sleep, and allow this scene of carnage to go onward?" And the aged man sat down.

"We do not wish to hear the fearful history any further," said Mr. Lee, in a low, sad voice. "Liquor has wrought for you just what it has for other villages wherever it exists; and the record of its strange, cruel deeds is soul-sickening beyond endurance. Now, who will sign this total abstinence pledge that I hold in my hand, and the promise connected with it to engage in mortal combat with the great destroyer of our race as long as life shall last?" And a long, spotless roll of paper, with a few lines at the top, was held up before the people.

"I will," responded Mr. Cole and Dr. Ray at the same time. "And so will I," came from all portions of the church. The paper was passed, and, strange to tell, fifty names were written upon it.

"We have made a grand beginning,'

said Mr. Lee; "and the good work will not end here. Fifty temperance soldiers can overthrow the rum power in this village, if they only fight well. I think that we had better meet upon a week-day evening, and devise some plan of action, and then meet regularly to carry it into practice."

The next Wednesday evening was appointed upon which to meet, and then the large congregation dispersed to their several homes.

"How I wish that Mr. Blake and Joel could have been there!" thought Edward Mason, as he walked slowly up the long hill in the beautiful summer moonlight.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HOME SHADOW.

"The days will come on their noiseless wings
And bring dark, gloomy shadows."

THE days and weeks which followed the events recorded in the last chapter passed very quickly to Edward, who toiled early and late in the store of Mr. Cole. He was generally the first in the sales-room each morning, although it was a long mile from the hill cottage. But the quiet walk in the fresh, balmy air of morning was just the exercise he needed to prepare him for the duties of the day. His cheeks flushed

with the rosy tints of health, and his bright, sparkling eyes betrayed no signs of nights spent in scenes of dissipation, or of a life lived in opposition to nature's genial laws. An hour passed in the fresh morning air drove away the pale, spiritless expression from the manly young face that otherwise would have rested there. Then, his noonday meal was eaten beneath the tall, shady elms that stood just back of the store. His dinner consisted of a plain lunch, prepared by Aunt Jane, and carefully stowed away in a little tin-pail, which he carried to and from his place of labor every day. While the other clerks passed the greater portion of the noonday hour in a smoky bar-room, inhaling the sickening odors of tobacco and alcohol, he was resting calmly in the deep, unbroken shade of the grand old elms. His sleeping hours were not

disturbed by fearful dreams and regretful thoughts; for the little chamber in the hill cottage contained no grim, destroying phantoms of sleep. If there was a spirit of unrest anywhere upon the breezy hill, it dwelt in the soul of the old woman who had lived alone for so many years. Strange how she could still cling to her unbelief in religion, while she had seen the fruits of loving, Christian faith! The old woman seemed to be growing more kind and gentle to Edward and little Maggie every day, but was strangely silent upon her own views of religion and faith in Jesus.

The little girl became strongly attached to "good Aunt Jane," as she called her, and seemed perfectly happy and contented at the hill cottage.

The lamb, kitten, and playful dog, with frequent visits from Annie Smith, quite chased away the feeling of loneli-

ness that at first filled the childish heart with sorrow. The bright, long summer days were seasons of happiness to the motherless girl; for she knew nothing of the shadows which lay in the great future that other eyes had discovered. Perhaps they were not real, for human eyes cannot always look clearly into the future.

Aunt Jane was never weary of performing deeds of love for the happiness of her sister's children; and in following the good impulses of her better nature, a strange, new sense of peace filled her soul. They lived very comfortably upon the wages that Edward earned, with the little monthly allowance that Aunt Jane cast in; but the hopes of going to school for a year or more, in order to prepare himself fully for mercantile pursuits, were all gone from the boy's soul.

"I shall have to gain my knowledge as I go along," he often said to Mr. Cole.

"You will do better than half who have gained all the knowledge to be learned in a commercial college," Mr. Cole would generally reply.

"Perhaps father will reform and assist me," he would sometimes say.

"Perhaps so," the merchant would generally reply, though less hopefully than when he spoke in regard to the boy's helping himself.

"Well, I will cheerfully walk in the path of present duty until the way opens," Edward would invariably answer.

Edward called very often to see Joel Blake, who still remained very weak and feeble. He could not walk out in the open air, or even ride but a short distance. People began to talk of consumption and of an early death; but Dr.

Ray seemed to think that when the cool autumn days came, there would be a change for the better in Joel.

"I think a little 'stock ale' occasionally would be good for him," said Mr. Blake to the doctor one day.

"I would not give him any ale," answered the doctor, shaking his head slowly.

"It is because you have become a temperance fanatic that you object to this!" exclaimed Mr. Blake hastily.

"No, that is not my reason," replied the doctor. "If you give him ale or wine, you will see worse results than you will if you do not; so I ask you not to think of it again."

"One cannot help speaking out his honest convictions, doctor," said Mr. Blake. "I will tell you what I am a-going to do," he continued. "I will call in Doctor Ross some day; and if

BE A LADY.

BY C. M.

You are making it a study,
  Amid life's perplexing whirl,
Just how to be "a lady,"
  My pretty, thoughtful girl!
Your fashion-plates are perfect—
  Your books on etiquette,
That treat of "style" and "manner,
  Are gems of art, my pet.

If you in life, *ma petite*,
  A social queen would be,
Then study well the graces,
  Faith, Hope, and Charity.
Pay deference to your elders,
  Keep soul and body calm;
And cultivate sweet temper,
  'Tis woman's greatest charm.

And yet, look up, O lassie!
  A moment from the page;
There is another lesson
  Soon learned at your sweet age,
'Tis this! the heart's the fountain
  From which politeness flows,
And mind must shape the manners
  As sunshine shapes the rose.

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employed to decoy Patrick.
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on, and in the space of a few m
country was aroused.
of men, armed, were sent ou
s to beat up the country in the
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in pursuit of something.
sently they perceived that the
ursuit was a man!

he thinks a little ale would do the boy good, you certainly will not object."

"But I shall object, Mr. Blake. If you give Joel a drop of liquor in any form, I shall not attend him in the future, or bear the responsibility." And the doctor spoke decidedly.

"This is carrying temperance notions a little too far," answered the father, half angrily.

"I think not in this case," said Dr. Ray, walking out of the room.

But the father thought otherwise, and Dr. Ross was called in to decide the matter.

"Give the boy wine three times each day, by all means," said the doctor, in a decided voice. "He wants something to brace him up, and give life and tone to his feeble nervous system."

From that day Doctor Ross was the one who looked after the health of the Blake family.

At first the people of N—— did not generally understand why Mr. Blake had employed Doctor Ross, who had only lived in the vicinity for a year. The skill and success of Doctor Ray had inspired the people with confidence in him for years, while but very little was known of the new physician. It was true that he came well recommended, and nothing had been discovered amiss in his general conduct; but, in spite of these facts, people still employed the old doctor, who had practised as a physician in their midst for nearly a score of years.

It was a new era in the life of Doctor Ross when the case of Joel Blake was placed in his hands; for, strange to say, the young man from that day began to grow stronger. The wine seemed to act like a charm, and new strength and life came to the emaciated body. There

soon appeared a new brightness in his eyes and an unusual flush upon his cheeks; and the arms that had been so weak and nerveless now seemed to be strong again.

"The wine is just the thing for him," Mr. Blake would often say to his friends. "If he had not taken it, I believe that the boy would have been in his grave now. Away with the false notions that will not allow wine to be used as a medicine!"

But Doctor Ray remained very silent while all of this transpired. He said but very little, and did not contradict the assertions of others.

"Time will prove the wisdom of giving the young man wine," he observed once to Mr. Cole.

"Time will tell a sad story about him, if he keeps on taking the hateful poison," the merchant replied; for he could foresee also where it would end.

The temperance cause did not prosper so finely in N—— after the wine wrought such a change in the health of Joel Blake. People said that if wine would really prove so beneficial in one case, it would in another, and, therefore, it was not right to sign a total abstinence pledge, and thus discard its use entirely. But notwithstanding all this, the advocates of temperance worked just as faithfully as before, and met regularly each week to devise plans of labor, and to cheer and encourage each other onward in the good cause. The young minister still headed the movement, and labored with all his might, cheerfully and hopefully, right in the face of discouragements and opposition. One of the ministers of N—— would occasionally lend a helping hand, as time and circumstances would allow; but the other did not seem in any way interested in

the movement. But the few who had gathered beneath the temperance banner were not easily discouraged, and so the cause gained ground slowly. They were faithfully "working and winning," slowly but surely.

Thus the autumn days came on as the glorious summer departed. The little cottage on the hill still overlooked a scene of bewildering beauty, although the sombre autumn days had really come. The deep, clear sky above was still cloudless and sunny, and the distant hills so sweetly resting in the blue, hazy atmosphere were grand beyond description. The early frosts had just touched the forest leaves enough to change them slightly, and yet they were not divested of their summer glory. The mingling of summer and autumn beauty created a fairy picture that could not fail to entrance the child of nature.

It was just at this time that Aunt Jane was stricken down with disease; and with this event a dark shadow came into the hill cottage. Edward asked Mrs. Smith to remain for a day or two with the sick woman, until he could find some one to take her place. She consented to the plan, but said that she could not remain an hour after he succeeded in obtaining another nurse. So with a heavy heart he started out to find some one to take care of Aunt Jane until she should recover.

He did not succeed very well, for he was unable to pay the wages of an experienced nurse; and with a sad heart, he went to Mr. Cole for advice and help.

"My wife can leave home for a day or so," said Mr. Cole cheerfully, "and, in the meantime, we will look around and see whom we can find to take care

of the old woman. I will send Dr. Ray up to see her at once."

"Yes, he ought to go at once, and must; but I do not see how we can pay him very soon." And Edward's voice was full of sorrow.

"Never mind that part," said Mr. Cole. "The good doctor will not force you to pay him as soon as his services are required no longer. He is a kind-hearted man, and feels deeply for the misfortunes of others. And as to paying a good nurse, do not borrow any trouble about it." And saying this the kind merchant hurried away.

The great burden did not rest quite so heavily upon the mind of Edward after this; yet he was unwilling to become an object of charity, and allow others to pay the extra expenses that would meet him. But still he labored on, trusting in God for deliverance.

Dr. Ray visited the patient at the hill cottage, and found her suffering greatly; yet she was very quiet, and no murmuring words came from her lips in regard to the severe pains that shook her frame.

"I do not care so much about it for my own sake, but it will make it pretty hard for the children. Poor Edward had enough to bear before," she said to Dr. Ray.

"We will help him in this new trial," the doctor replied cheerfully. "It will take a great deal to crush him, for he is not one of the weak kind. He will bear a pretty heavy burden, and scarcely realize it."

"Yes, I know it," she replied; "but he cannot bear everything. He will do well enough under ordinary trials; but if I should die now, I cannot see just what he will do."

"God will provide for him in some

way, I guess, and watch over his interests in the future, just as he has in the past. The young man is a Christian, and God always cares for his own." And here the doctor stopped.

The sick woman did not reply to this, but sighed long and deeply. She turned her head away, and for a long time seemed to be watching the distant hills. Perhaps God was teaching the poor woman in a surer way than he had taught her during the long years that had passed by

CHAPTER IX.

A RIFT IN THE CLOUDS.

"I plough no more a desert land
To harvest weeds and tare;
The manna falling from God's hand
Rebukes my painful care."

"DO you think that Aunt Jane is very sick, Doctor Ray?" asked Edward the next morning after the doctor's first visit.

"Yes, my boy, she is pretty sick, and I do not know just how it will end. She is an old woman, and cannot bear up under disease like a young person; yet I hope for a favorable change soon. I would not say a word to cause you

unnecessary alarm, neither would I encourage false hopes. I generally try in all cases to speak the truth without giving alarm, and usually succeed much better than when I conceal the real facts. If her mind was only at rest, I should be more hopeful; but the truth is, she is in a state of unrest and disquietude. It is a hard matter sometimes to cure the body when the mind is diseased far more. She was calm yesterday, but this morning she is greatly agitated."

"Poor Aunt Jane is not a Christian, and I guess that is what troubles her." And a long sigh came from Edward's lips.

"Yes, I think that this is the secret of her trouble. She feels herself drifting out to sea upon the rough, restless waves, with no pilot to guide her shattered boat, or anchor to cast in the deep water. She has been convinced

that there is a beautiful, higher life that all may live, and her earth-weary soul is seeking for its genial light to guide her to the port of peace. You had better go in and talk to the poor old benighted soul." And saying this, the doctor sprang into his light wagon, and went down the hill.

Edward did not work that day, as Aunt Jane requested him to stay at home.

"Perhaps I shall die before night," she said to him, as he went into the little bed-room after his talk with Doctor Ray. "My head feels very strangely, and my poor old body is growing weaker all the time. I do not care so much about this old, worn-out mansion, but there is a living principle within that will not mingle with the clay. I know that the body will go back to dust again; but what will become of

the undying part I cannot tell." And the sick woman looked away again through the window.

"The spirit will go to the spirit-land,' said Edward slowly. "The body becomes clay again, and the soul returns to God, who gave it."

"But I suppose that there are two spirit worlds: one where the good and pure dwell; the other, where lost souls wander upon the lowlands of misery." And the old woman's voice was full of agony.

"Yet none need to choose the life of misery!" exclaimed Edward. "God never forces human souls along in the ways of death. They go to ruin simply because they will. His Spirit and revealed word say, 'Come unto me and be saved'; so, if any refuse to go, it is their own fault."

"But there are instances when it is

too late to repent," said the sick woman, in a bitter tone. "The Spirit of God does not always strive with man, and the day of grace may be sinned away. It is those who yield to the Spirit's call that are saved."

"I think that God will accept us any time we will come to him, even though it be at the eleventh hour. If we feel our need of him, it is a sure sign that his Spirit has not forsaken us. If we have no desire to go to him, and are indifferent to our fate in the future life, then we may well believe that there is danger ahead."

Edward spoke these words very slowly, as if weighing every one; but the truth in them went quickly to the soul panting for eternal waters. All fear and reserve were gone in a moment, and the sick woman exclaimed eagerly:

"Then there is hope for me; for I

do feel my need of him, and long for the blest assurance of happiness in the future life."

"Assuredly there is hope for you, Aunt Jane," answered Edward joyfully. "God is just as willing to accept at the eleventh hour as any time, if the seeking one is truly anxious to enter into the fold. He saved the dying thief, you know, and he has left this promise upon record: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'"

"That was just what I was trying to remember," said Aunt Jane, while a look of hope flashed from her dim eyes. "I have heard your mother repeat those same words, and so I thought that they must be in the Bible. I have not read that book much since he died and my children were taken from me, for I did not believe it after I was tried so severely in the furnace-fires; and when your

mother once said the same words that you have just repeated, I did not think that I should ever wish to hear them again. But since she died so peacefully and happy, and seemed so willing to go, I have been convinced that she possessed something that I do not; and I have become very weary of my own way of living, and have longed many a day for her strong faith in God and in his revealed word. And then, your own faith in the Bible and religion has affected me deeply, and I have earnestly wished to understand the way of life, even as well as you do. But the way has been so dark, and my own unbelief so strong, that I have thought, if there was a better way in which to walk, that I should never find it. And I have often thought, also, that God's Spirit had departed for ever from me; for I had dared to disbelieve the Bible, and had turned

away from his love, because strange life-trials met me upon my way. But your earnest words have given me new hope to believe in the goodness of God and his power to save. You have the same simple faith that your mother possessed, and so I am sure that you are right." And here the sick woman became too much exhausted to proceed.

"You have talked too much, Aunt Jane," said Edward, alarmed at the unusually pale look that came over the wrinkled face.

"I shall feel better in a little while," she faintly answered.

"Do not talk any more now; wait until you are stronger. You have cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, and all you have to do is to take him at his word, and believe that he saves you." And saying this, Edward stooped down and gently kissed the pale, aged face before

him, and then quietly walked out of the room.

"She is only a step from the kingdom," he said to Mrs. Cole, who had faithfully watched over the sick woman during the night.

"God grant that she may take the last step, and go in!" responded Mrs. Cole.

"She will, I am sure," said Edward. "God will not suffer her to drift out again upon the cold ocean of unbelief, when she is so near the open door; my prayers for her certainly will be answered."

"If they will be answered in regard to her, why will they not in all other cases?" asked the good woman in a hopeful voice.

"Perhaps they will be," was the low answer.

That afternoon, the post-boy was

seen slowly walking up the hill toward the little cottage.

"I wonder what brings him here," Edward said to Mrs. Cole, as the newcomer entered the little yard.

"He undoubtedly has a letter for you," Mrs. Cole replied; "for I think that he would come upon no other errand. His business is only to distribute the mail-matter about the village."

"No one ever writes to me," Edward answered. "Perhaps the letter is for you, Mrs. Cole."

"I have a letter for Edward Mason," said the boy, after he was admitted into the little kitchen; and saying this, he handed to Edward a large brown envelope.

"From father!" exclaimed Edward joyfully; and in a moment the seal was broken, and a folded sheet fell out.

In the letter that the envelope contained, there was a smaller scrap of paper, which Edward at first did not notice, in his haste to read the message from his father. But something that he read caused him to examine it, when, to his great surprise, he found it to be a check for one hundred dollars. The boy's head became dizzy, and a darkness came over his vision. The letter and check he still held; but he could not see them, for everything around him was strangely dark.

"Does the letter contain unpleasant news, Edward?" asked Mrs. Cole, as she noticed his agitation.

"I guess not," answered Edward slowly, as if trying to think; for his thoughts also were sadly confused. "It contains good news, I think," he continued, his ideas growing a little more clear.

"Yes," he went on, "it contains good

news; for he must have earned the money, and he never could have done this unless he had remained sober. But you read the letter, Mrs. Cole." And Edward handed the written sheet to the kind woman, who read it aloud to the attentive listener:

"MY DEAR EDWARD: You will undoubtedly be very much surprised at receiving a letter from me with the enclosed check; yet I think that it will be a happy surprise, and I am sure that it will make your heart glad to know that your father is living a better life. I have not drunk a drop of anything containing alcohol since your mother died, and I have been hard at work ever since. I have had a pretty hard time to overcome temptation and keep away from the haunts of sin; yet thus far I have succeeded. I have wronged you

cruelly, my boy, during the sad years of my squandered life; yet, as I am trying to do better, and mean to atone as far as possible for past misdeeds, I feel certain that you will forgive me and accept the aid from me that should have been given long ago. I am very grateful to God that my bodily strength and health were not wholly destroyed by those sad years of sin and dissipation, and that they are slowly returning to me. I was a good mechanic once, and might have been a wealthy man now, with a happy family about me, if I had let liquor alone. That has proved the destroyer of my happiness, and caused my loved ones to walk in the gloomy path of sorrow; yet God is very good to me, for my skill as a workman is still left me, and I am receiving large wages, of which I send you a part. I wish you to use this money for anything you need,

and repay Aunt Jane for her trouble. I wish you to go to school, as you have desired, and so become fully prepared to engage in mercantile pursuits. I would advise you to go to B——, as there is an excellent school there for young men preparing for business. I will defray all your expenses cheerfully, and will look after little Maggie also. I am very thankful that I can do this, and so atone for past neglect.

"I shall remain here a while longer, as I am doing well, and do not meet so many temptations as I should in N——. I wish to see you and darling little Maggie very much, but will patiently wait. I would have written before; but I thought that I would wait until I could send 'fruit meet for repentance'; and then, I knew that as long as you lived with Aunt Jane, you would not suffer very much.

"Pray for your unworthy father, who is earnestly trying with God's help to overcome.

"JACOB MASON."

The glad tears of gratitude were coursing down the cheeks of both Mrs. Cole and Edward when the letter was concluded, and for several moments complete silence filled the room. Mrs. Cole was the first to speak.

"If he is trying 'with God's help' to overcome, he will succeed; for our Heavenly Father never fails to help human beings who trust in him."

"How happy I am!" said Edward at last. "If Aunt Jane were only a Christian, and well, my cup of happiness would be full." And saying this, he went gently to the door of the sick woman, to see if she were awake.

"I am awake, Edward, so come in,"

she said in a low, calm voice, as a quiet smile came over her lips. "I have heard the letter, and rejoice with you, and trust that you will rejoice with me. The Saviour has revealed himself to me at last." And the pale, wrinkled face was fairly radiant with happiness. "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," she repeated slowly. "What a blessed meaning there is in those words, Edward, to the earth-weary soul! Strange that I doubted so long, while he is so willing to save!"

Edward did not reply, for his heart was too full. He only knelt down by the bedside, and thanked God silently for his great goodness and loving kindness. Strange, new feelings came to the soul of the Christian boy that cast their brightness over his pathway for long years.

CHAPTER X.

JOEL'S DEATH.

"He rests at last all peacefully,
Free from the tempter's power."

THE next morning, when Dr. Ray came to the "hill cottage," he pronounced Aunt Jane decidedly better. She had rested very quietly during the night, and seemed like a new being in the morning. "Her mind is at rest, so we may hope that her body may soon be well again," said the doctor to Edward.

"I am very glad," he replied, "for it would have been a sad blow to us if

she had been taken away, even in the midst of our good luck in other respects. She has been very kind to us, and I will earnestly try to repay her, if she lives. Her life-trials have been long and severe; but I trust that they are all ended now, and that her future days may be full of peace and happiness."

"If heavenly light has truly broken upon her soul, she will be happy," answered the doctor. "But there is something else I wish to talk about this morning. I wish that you would see Joel Blake soon, for I am afraid that he is getting into deep water again. May be you can influence him to do better in some way."

"What do you mean, Doctor Ray?" asked Edward; and his face became very pale.

"Just what I say, that he is going back to his old ways and to ruin. The

'medicine' that the new doctor ordered has just renewed the old appetite with ten-fold power. The ale and wine, I think, do not quite satisfy the boy now; for I saw him coming out of Johnson's bar-room only yesterday, and, if I am not very much mistaken, he was half-intoxicated. There was a strange wildness in his eyes and an unusual glow upon his cheeks. Poor boy! he will not last long if he goes on in this way. I foresaw it all, and warned his father in time. But the blinded man would not heed it, and so now he must suffer the consequences, which will be sad enough. The boy would have been all right when the cool, bracing airs of autumn had driven away the summer's languid atmosphere. There would now have been a natural glow of health upon his cheeks, if he had only let the vile poison alone."

"It is too bad!" exclaimed Edward;

"for he was almost a Christian, and only waited for a word from his father to make a public profession of religion."

"But his father did not say the little word that might have saved his son, although he is a professor of religion himself. The old man does not see his duty in the most important work of life. He is moral, and a good man in many respects, but sadly indifferent to the secret well-springs of human action. He may succeed in governing his own outward life, but it will be a little more difficult to hold in check the restless nature of his son, whose inward life is fed by the great governing influences of sin and passion."

"I do not think that it would do any good to talk to Joel now," said Edward in a sad tone; "but yet, I will see him," he added, a little more hopefully.

"That is right, see him, by all means,

and perhaps he may be benefited by your visit. If we wish to save others, we must work for their redemption. God help you to do something for poor Joel!" And here the doctor rose to go.

As Aunt Jane was so much better, Edward thought that he would go to the village and visit Joel that afternoon, and see if he could not say something to his erring friend that would reveal his true position unto him, and cause him to do better. With a prayerful heart, he started out upon his mission of love, silently hoping that he should find Joel alone. In this respect he was favored; for he found his young friend in the same little chamber where they had talked so earnestly together before. He was directed by the housekeeper up the long stairs, and, after rapping at the door, he was admitted into the presence of his friend. Joel appeared very

much confused, but at last asked his visitor to be seated.

"I thought that I would call in and see you a little while, as I was not at work in the store to-day." And here Edward also became a trifle confused.

"I am glad to see you," answered Joel in an unnatural voice; "yet, as I was not expecting company, you took me by surprise. I was just preparing to take my usual afternoon nap; for you see that I have not wholly recovered my strength since my sickness. Dr. Ross says that I must be careful for a long time to come."

"I thought that you were quite well again," answered Edward; "but I think that I will call some other time, when I shall not disturb your hours for rest." And saying this, the visitor rose to go.

"I can wait an hour or so before I sleep; so do not go just yet," said Joel,

half eagerly. "I feel a little 'blue' to-day, and want some one to cheer me up. You are just the chap." And here the speaker seemed to regain his self-possession.

But Edward did not just like the manner and tone of his friend, and in a moment the thought came to him that Joel was under the influence of liquor.

"It will do no good to talk to him in such a condition," he thought at first; but remembering that he had often seen him thus before, and still capable of talking and attending to duty, he decided to stay a little while.

"What is the matter with you, Joel?" he asked in a kind voice, seating himself near his friend.

"A little of everything, and not much of any one thing," answered Joel, in a voice that sounded strangely unnatural to Edward. "The fact is," he continued, "the

old man has come down pretty hard on me, just because I went into Johnson's yesterday; and then, the boys laughed at me so much because I had half resolved not to go there any more when I was sick. I don't like to drink such dish-watery stuff as father keeps, and so I got a bottle filled with brandy at Dick's yesterday. I hid it from father, and have been waiting for him to get off before I finished it up." And here Joel seemed to lose all control of himself, and his shame and fear also.

He went to the bed, and lifted up a pillow, where Edward discovered a large brandy-bottle more than half full of the fiery beverage.

"I just took a drink before you came in, and here she goes again. I thought, when you first came in, that I would appear very nice, and deceive you, as I have often done before; but, come to

think it over, I hate deception, and then this horrid thirst came again to me." And here a strange, wild look came over the flushed face, and he raised the bottle to his lips.

"Don't drink any more, Joel," exclaimed Edward in a tone of alarm, seizing the weak, trembling hand that held the bottle. "You have drunk too much already; and you will become deeply intoxicated if you take any more."

"Who has got a better right, I'd like to know? So just let me alone, old preacher." And the drunken boy tried to raise the bottle to his lips; but Edward held the weak arm, and begged him not to drink again.

"Let me alone, I say. I'm not going to play hypocrite any longer." And the poor crazed boy struggled fiercely to free his hand.

"Very well," said Edward, relaxing

his hold upon the arm of Joel; "you may drink it if you like, but I shall tell your father all about it."

"Well, let me drink once more before you tell him." And here he succeeded in raising the bottle to his lips, and drank long and deeply of its fiery contents.

In a few moments, a stupor came over him and his ideas became completely bewildered, and he sank back upon his bed in a deep sleep. With tears coursing down his cheeks, Edward took the brandy-bottle and placed it upon the little table, saying to himself, "That will tell the story"; and then went silently out of the house.

There was a stormy scene enacted when Mr. Blake came home and became acquainted with the sad facts relating to Joel. Never before was the indulgent father known to give way to such a

degree of anger and passion. The old housekeeper, who had lived in the family for more than a dozen years, became alarmed at the unusual conduct of the angry, excited man, and came to the conclusion that he had lost his senses. Joel himself was greatly frightened, although not fully free from the influences of the brandy.

"If you ever dare to go to Dick Johnson's again, I'll thrash you half to death, which I can do very easily," cried the exasperated father, seizing hold of the trembling son and shaking him roughly. "And I'll give Johnson a good 'blowing-up' for daring to give you liquor." And the father seized his hat, and walked swiftly out of the room.

In a very few moments, he stood in the low, filthy bar-room of Dick Johnson's hotel, and in a stern, loud voice

forbade the landlord to give his son another drop of liquor.

"I did not give it to him," answered the landlord, with a sneer, who was not to be frightened by angry looks and loud words. "Why, bless your dear soul, he bought it of me, and paid me the cash. It is my business to sell liquor, sir."

The insulting words and manner of the rumseller only raised the anger of Mr. Blake to a higher degree, and in a hoarse, unnatural voice he asked:

"Do you mean to say, sir, that you will give my son any more liquor?"

"Oh! no, Mr. Blake, I shall not give it to him; I shall sell it to him. This is my business. But what is the matter, Blake? I thought that you were a friend to the liquor traffic. Has Rev. Mr. Lee made you over into one of these milk-and-water temperance men?"

But Mr. Blake did not heed the taunt. He only said:

"I shall look out that my son does not obtain any money to pay you for liquor."

"You had better give him money, Mr. Blake, to pay for it. He may obtain it as he did when he worked for Mr. Cole. It is far better to give the young man a little spending money now and then than to make him steal it." And saying this, the landlord went into the bar, and, after filling up two brandy-glasses, said: "You are out of tune to-day, Mr. Blake; come up and take a drink of brandy to quiet your nerves."

"Do you think, sir, that I would stoop so low as to drink here?" answered Mr. Blake, walking toward the door.

"I can't see any difference between drinking here and in your own house. It is true my liquor is a little

stronger than yours, and may make a man drunk sooner; but yours is just as dangerous as mine, and I think a little more so. Why, Mr. Blake, Joel did not learn to drink here. He learned at home, and only came here when your harmless drinks became too weak to satisfy his thirst. But, come, you had better try a little brandy." And here the insulting landlord drank a half-glass of the brandy himself.

"Curses on you, and your brandy too!" And saying this, the excited man walked away.

Perhaps the truth at last began to shed its light upon the soul that had been dwelling in darkness so long; for Mr. Blake appeared very sad and thoughtful for weeks after this event. He watched every movement of his son, and scarcely allowed him to leave the house for an hour. But the

hateful "home drinks" were still allowed to remain in his cellar, and Joel helped himself to them whenever he wished. Several times he became slightly intoxicated, yet his father did not seem to realize this. The young man was slowly regaining his strength, and it was decided that, when Edward Mason should leave for a year's study in the commercial college at B——, he should take his old place again. Mr. Cole, at the earnest request of Joel's father, had consented to the plan, though with many fears as to the propriety of such a transaction. But this plan was never carried into execution; for just one week before Edward was to leave, Joel visited the bar-room of Dick Johnson, and became crazy with drink again. His father was absent from home at that time, and so the poor boy remained all night with a

few of his old companions, drinking and carousing. When morning came, he was carried home weak and exhausted, and every fibre of his being quivering with pain. Both physicians were called to see him, and both thought that he could not live. It was truly a sad scene to hear his low, bitter groans and piteous appeals for aid. "I shall die," he moaned, "and I am lost for ever. I might have been saved, but it is too late now."

Edward visited him, and talked long and earnestly with the poor human being, who was so near the eternal world.

"If I had only heeded the words of Doctor Ray, and let the hateful poison alone, I might have lived for years to come," he said in a bitter tone, as he was suffering terribly with fierce, cruel pains. "But I don't mind dying so much, if I was prepared to go. If I had

listened to your words, Edward, I should now be safe. Oh! how foolish I have been."

"But God will accept you any time that you cast yourself at his feet. There is hope for you as long as you live," replied Edward very earnestly.

"How do you know that God will accept me?" asked Joel anxiously.

"Because he has promised in his word to accept all that come to him," was the ready answer.

"Read it to me; I want to hear just the words." And there was a strange earnestness in the weak, tremulous voice.

"Yes, I'll read it to you." And in a few moments the sick boy's pains were half forgotten while listening to the dear, blessed words which bade him hope. Many a well-known passage was read by Edward, who knew just where

to find all the precious invitations of the Saviour to come unto him.

"He must mean me, too, when he says, 'Come unto me, all ye that are heavy-laden.' I am weary, and long for rest—" And here the speaker suddenly stopped.

"I cannot allow this to go on any longer," said Doctor Ross, who had been in the room for the last ten minutes. "The boy is too sick to talk, and this excitement is only wearing him out."

"I shall not talk much longer, Doctor Ross, so let me die in peace. You told father to give me wine, and it has proved my ruin."

"Do not interfere in this business, doctor," said Mr. Blake, who was shaking with emotion.

"Father," said Joel in a louder tone, "will you not promise me to empty the beer and cider barrels, and throw the bottles of wine away, just as soon as I

am buried? They ruined me; for if I had never meddled with them, I should not have possessed such a terrible appetite."

"Yes, Joel, I promise you this," was the low, firm answer.

"I am glad that you will do as I wish, father. I thought that you would refuse such a request. But I cannot talk any more now. I am glad that Edward read those words to me, 'Come unto me, all—'" but here the speaker stopped again, and then became unconscious.

For two days he lingered, and then the last spark of life went out in darkness. Edward was bending over him when the death angel claimed his own, and caught the low words as they came from the icy lips, "Come unto me—I am going, dear Edward."

CHAPTER XI.

NEW LABORERS IN THE FIELD.

"Never fear lest we should stumble
While He holds us by the hand."

FTER Joel was buried, a change seemed to come over the public mind in regard to the drinking practices of the people of N——. The true facts relating to the death of the young man were well understood generally; and it was also known that Mr. Blake, directly after the funeral, threw into the street his beer, cider, and choice wines. In some way the story had become current that Joel had attributed his downfall and death to the sad mis-

take that had been made by his father and Doctor Ross in giving him wine, and thus keeping alive and renewing the old, fatal appetite. The people were greatly agitated when these facts became known, and the fame of Dr. Ross was rapidly decreasing. It was so evident that Joel came to his death by yielding to the cruel appetite for strong drink that the reasoning portion of the community began to think that the drinking customs of the village were a great social curse. A few were really alarmed, and decided to join the "total abstinence" band at once. It was true that they had seen others fall by the same fell destroyer; but then the temperance question had never been agitated, and the people had not thought to trace these sad events to their true source. When the public mind is agitated upon any subject, a small event will often work

wondrous changes in the general aspect of the case; and so it was when Joel Blake died from the effects of a drunken carousal. So it was not strange that the next temperance meeting was better attended, and that a new interest was awakened. Mr. Cole, Dr. Ray, and Rev. Mr. Lee, as usual, were there to advocate the great principles of temperance. They had worked hard and earnestly week after week, amid the most discouraging circumstances, and with stern opposition meeting them upon every hand. They had spoken encouraging words to the weak ones who had signed the total abstinence pledge at the first meeting, and thus far had succeeded in keeping them from abandoning the cause of right.

Upon the night in question, the hearts of these three brave workers were greatly cheered by the unusual tokens of better

times that they saw. The house was nearly full of earnest, thoughtful-looking men and women, and it at once became evident that a new movement was about to be commenced in the good work. Several who had before opposed the temperance work were there; but there was no look of hostility upon their faces, and so their presence was regarded as a favorable omen. The meeting was opened in the usual way, and some unfinished business of the former evening attended to. Then there was a call for short speeches from any present, which was responded to by two or three gentlemen who favored the temperance cause. Soon there was an unusual stir in one corner of the church, and all were very much surprised to see Mr. Blake arise slowly to his feet. There was a deep silence in every part of the house, and all waited in eager expectation to

hear what he would say. He was greatly agitated, and his face was very pale; yet he spoke in a firm voice, and said:

"FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS: You are all undoubtedly surprised at seeing me here to-night, and will be more so at hearing the confession that I have to make. One month ago, I should have scorned the thought of attending a temperance meeting; but the sad events of the last few days have changed very much my ideas in regard to the subject of our social drinking customs. I cannot advocate any longer this great false principle of intemperance that has destroyed my only son, even before manhood had set its seal upon his brow. I cannot be a true man and sustain this evil any longer. I have been blinded all my life, and might have been until my death, had not my own son fallen by this terrible

destroyer. Alas! that the scales did not fall from my eyes in time to save my loved one. It was a hard matter to lay my son away in the grave, but it is far worse to think that my own hand led him to his cruel doom. This knowledge will be a sad burden for me to carry down to my grave; and my few remaining days will be full of bitterness. But, my friends, I will fight against the destroyer of my happiness until my arms become nerveless in death. Henceforth I shall be an advocate of total abstinence; and nothing but pure cold water shall I ever drink. And you, whose sons are still left undestroyed by this cruel monster, I ask you to look to this matter in time, and seek to save your manly boys ere they are bound in the terrible chains of appetite. I was warned in time; but I did not heed it, and so I suffered the sad consequences. Do

not, I beseech of you, run the great risk of seeing your sons go to ruin."

Here the speaker took his seat, and another long, deep silence followed, which at last was broken by a voice that sounded very familiar to the greater portion of the congregation. A man had arisen, who could scarcely be recognized in the dim light which fell upon his half-averted face; but in a few moments all became aware of the fact that Jacob Mason was in the church and addressing the audience. A whisper went around, and a new feeling of surprise and bewilderment possessed every person present. Edward Mason heard the familiar tones and saw the well-known face of his father. He started up in his seat, and a strange, confused look came over his face. He was calm in a moment, however, for the whole truth flashed over his mind that his father meant

to take them all by surprise, and so had returned home when none expected him; but, like the rest of the people present, he listened eagerly to the words of the speaker.

"I, too, have a few words to say to you, my friends, upon the great subject of temperance," Mr. Mason said, in a tone that betrayed much emotion. "I stand before you to-night a redeemed man—redeemed from the terrible life-curse that has rested upon me and made me for long years a poor, wretched slave. I cannot quite explain to you why the strange, cruel spell departed and a new light broke in upon my soul; yet I think it was because others labored for my redemption, and prayed, as long years went by, that I might be saved. It is true that she, my wife, did not live to see the great change that has come over my life; yet her prayers and tears were

not lost, and her grand work still remains. When she died, the great work in my own soul began; and step by step I was led onward by some good angel, until I became free from my cruel master, and felt the well-springs of eternal life sweetly flooding my soul. It was true that the tempter tried to hold me in chains; yet by working for my own redemption, and by yielding to be led by God's spirit of love, I overcame my enemy, and to-night I am free. He who works and trusts in God will surely win, for the kind Master always crowns the efforts of his children with success. If you wish to overcome in your grand undertaking of suppressing the liquor traffic, and promoting the cause of right, just trust in God, and work on, and you shall win. You all know what I have been for years; and if such a poor, wretched human being can be saved,

there is hope for all. An immortal soul is worth saving; so labor on, and many a priceless jewel shall adorn your crowns of life in the eternal world. I know that the great All-Father will keep me, and that at last I shall meet her glorified spirit in the holy land, where no rum-sellers dwell, or poor sin-crushed drunkards are bound with cruel chains. I have returned home to care for my loved children, and so strive to atone for the past. Henceforth I shall be one of your numbers, and fight with all my might and power against this curse—intemperance."

Mr. Mason took his seat, and then the temperance pledge was circulated around the church. Many new names were added to it, and many more confessed their life-blindness and sad mistakes. At last the benediction was pronounced, and then Edward Mason, with glad tears

streaming down his face, grasped his father's hand. It was a joyful meeting, and the low, earnest "God bless you, my son," that came from the father's lips seemed to cover up all the wrongs of the past. Many a "God bless you" was spoken that night as the hand of Jacob Mason was grasped, and the redeemed man felt that he was surrounded by friends. As the father and son walked together up the moonlit hill that night, there was a new feeling of love and sympathy in the soul of each; and when Aunt Jane greeted the new-comer with joy and forgiveness beaming in her dim eyes, while the soft, white arms of little Maggie, who had crept from her couch at the sound of his voice, were twining around his neck, Jacob Mason felt that he still had something to live for. Calmly he rested that night in the hill cottage.

CHAPTER XII.

VICTORY AT LAST.

"And the soul that sees the Father
Never more shall darkness know."

A YEAR has passed away since the return of Jacob Mason to N——. It has wrought a wondrous change in him, as well as in the general aspect of the temperance cause of N——, which has gained strength and friends each day as the months went by. The friends of right worked fearlessly on, led by the noble young minister who began the grand movement, and God had crowned their every effort with success. When their enemies met them upon the battle-field, they faltered not, but still

worked on and trusted in God. Dr. Ray had regained his former popularity, and many new friends had greeted him as he had journeyed along his life-path. Dr. Ross had also become a convert to the principles of temperance, and worked side by side with his old medical friend. A grand revival of religion had been in progress in the churches of the two ministers who were engaged in the temperance work, while, strange to say, no interest had been awakened in the one whose pastor refused to help the temperance workers. Dick Johnson was obliged to leave the village in the night to escape justice, and the other hotels had to give up the base liquor traffic. Mr. Blake showed no mercy to the rumsellers, but pursued them without pity until they gave up their unholy business. Only one place in the village contained a drop of the soul-killing poison, and this was

owned by a respectable Christian, a member of the church that would not join the temperance movement. He was very careful how he dealt out liquor; for he knew the penalty if he went too far. The temperance people of N—— were determined never to lay down their weapons of warfare until their last enemy was slain; and so they worked on.

Edward Mason returned home, and took his place in Mr. Cole's store again. He had studied hard and earnestly during the year, and had made rapid progress in the particular branch of knowledge which was to prepare him for the profession that he had chosen. It was a happy day when he returned to N—— and once more took up his abode at the hill cottage. To be sure, it was further from his place of labor than he often found to be convenient; yet as Aunt Jane was greatly attached to her "hill

home," and could not be persuaded to leave it, they all concluded to remain there. Mr. Mason found employment in N—— soon after his return, by which he obtained all the comforts of life, besides paying the expenses of Edward while at school. The hill cottage was soon to be enlarged and made more comfortable and convenient in many respects. It had been decided that Edward's wages were to be saved as capital, by which he was to become a partner with Mr. Cole when he should arrive at the proper age. As his wages were to be increased, he would be the possessor of several hundred dollars at the appointed time, if no misfortune should befall him. And so, with a happy, trusting heart, he entered the store again, hoping to "work and win." "God helps him who helps himself," was the motto of the Christian boy.

He still worked with all his strength for the cause of temperance and for the church of God, of which he was a faithful member. Who dare say that he will not win a golden crown that shall glow in beauty for ever? Aunt Jane had become a happy, contented woman, and cheerfully and patiently worked for the Master, waiting to hear the welcome message, "Come." Little Maggie still clung to her with all the ardor of her childish nature, and loved her with the same devotion.

The sweet child of six summers filled the old home with gladness; for it was impossible to live in the sunshine of her presence, and not worship at the shrine of innocence and purity.

Oh! what happy changes may be wrought, and what beams of glory may come over the most desolate lives, if the soul only trusts in Jesus, and will throw

open its windows to be filled with peace. Truly, "working and winning" go hand in hand when the Master leads and directs the human being striving for victory.

PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

National Temperance Society

AND PUBLICATION HOUSE.

THE NATIONAL TEMPERANCE SOCIETY, organized in 1866 for the purpose of supplying a sound and able Temperance literature, have already stereotyped and published *three hundred and fifty* publications of all sorts and sizes, from the one-page tract up to the bound volume of 500 pages. This list comprises books, tracts, and pamphlets, containing essays, stories, sermons, arguments, statistics, history, etc., upon every phase of the question. Special attention has been given to the department

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